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AMIGA POWER

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MEGA LO MANIA – PLAYING GOD FOR *LAUGHS?*

ARE SENSIBLE SOFTWARE SERIOUS OR WHAT?

THE SHAPE OF GOD-SIMS TO COME...

Unveiled: the spawn of Populous

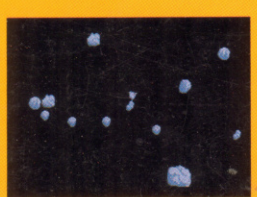
PLUS!
AMIGA POWER DISK 5

QUICK! HURRY OVER TO PAGE 5 FOR FULL DETAILS! →

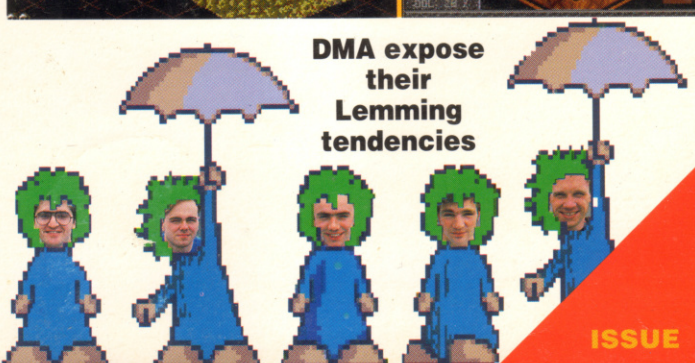
BARBARIAN II

Stunning beat-'em-up action in this giant demo specially prepared by Psygnosis

PLUS! BEST OF PD SPECIAL! FIVE FULL GAMES!



- AMIGOIDS
- XFIRE
- KING
- RAPS
- METAGALACTIC LLAMAS



DMA expose their Lemming tendencies

ISSUE 5

DARKMAN

Peyton Westlake was left for dead... Darkman now lives. With the ability to take on the appearance of anyone he chooses, he has sworn to avenge his would-be assassins whose evil exploits have left him hideously disfigured. Now you take on the role of **Darkman** - master the technology of his disguising system - enter the gang of mobster Robert G. Durant and conquer them from within.

Live through all the high spots of the movie - the breathtaking helicopter fight sequence - the skyscraper shoot-out - dice with death as you are plunged, swinging into the heaving freeway traffic.

Darkman lives... but not for long?!

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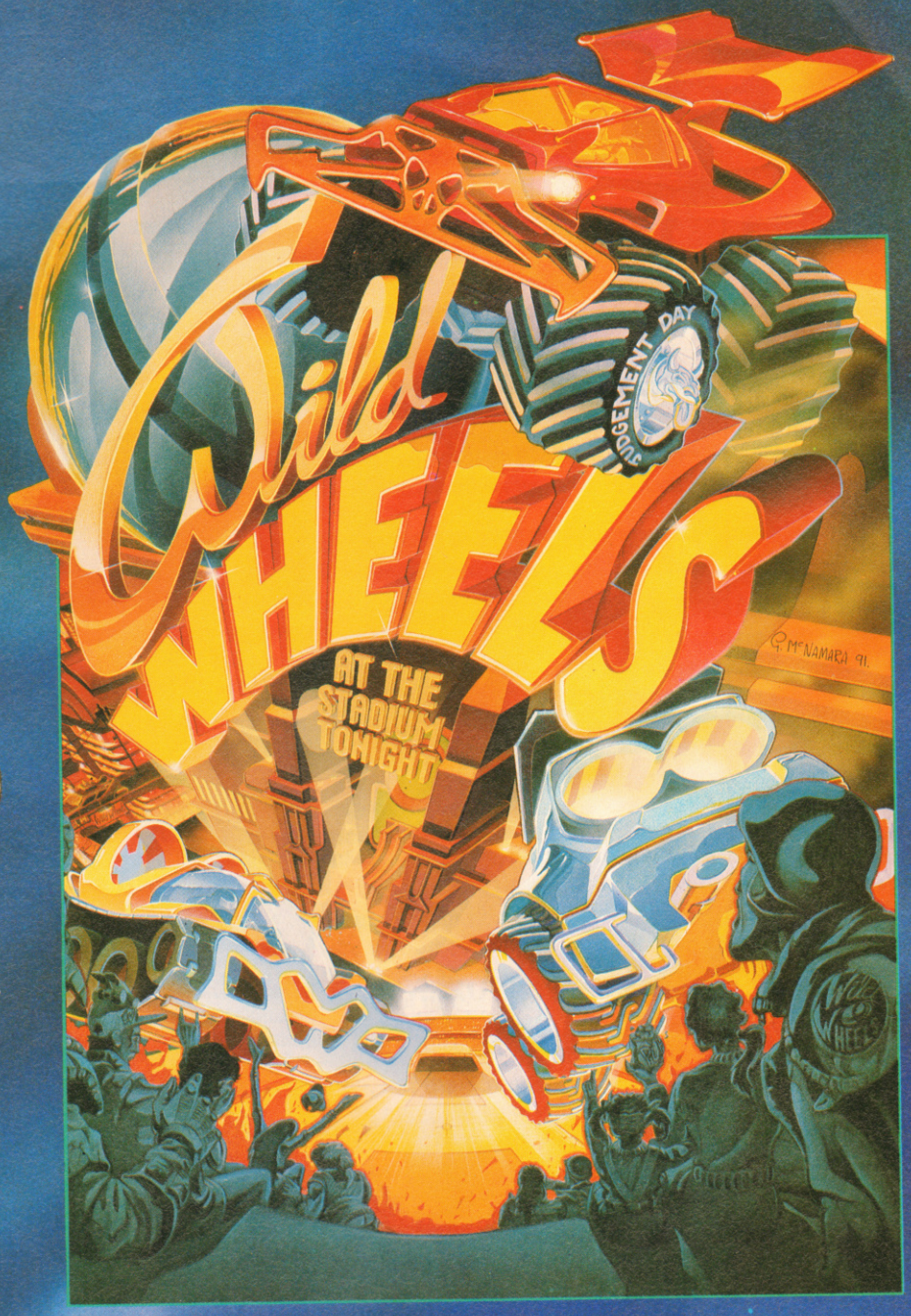

My head is thumpin', and my heart is pumping the adrenalin around every vessel of my hyper-tense body - the 'driving unit', that will be shoe-horned, wedged like a Colt 45 into its holster, as I am placed into the command seat of my vehicle - ready to enter the arena of play... and combat.

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But that's just half the game story. Now **YOU** enter the arena... **ENJOY THE SHOW!**

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THIS IS AMIGA POWER

AMIGA POWER
ISSUE FIVE SEPT 1991

EDITOR
Matt Bielby
DEPUTY EDITOR
Colin Campbell
PRODUCTION EDITOR
Mark Ramshaw
STAFF WRITER
Stuart Campbell
CONSULTANT EDITOR
Gary Penn
ART EDITOR
Matthew Williams
ART ASSISTANT
Lisa Nicholls
ADVERTISING MANAGER
Alison Morton
ADVERTISING EXECUTIVE
Susanne Mansfield
ADVERTISING PRODUCTION
Deborah Cook
PUBLISHER
Greg Ingham
PROMOTIONS MANAGER
Michele Harris
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
Sue Hartley
MANAGING DIRECTOR
Chris Anderson

CONTRIBUTORS: Jonathan Davies, Sean Masterson, Angela Neal, Julia O'Shea, Andy Ide, Simon Windsor, Harriet Athay
LINO & SCANNING: Simon Chittenden, Jerome Clough, Chris Stocker, Simon Windsor
PHOTOGRAPHY: Ashton James, Stuart Whale, Gordon Reid

EDITORIAL & ADVERTISING
Amiga Power,
Future Publishing Ltd,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath BA1 2BW
Tel 0225 442244
Fax 0225 446019

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Lynn Bowler, The Old Barn,
Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PY
Tel 0458 74011

Thanks this Issue to: Asam Ahmad for his work on the cover disk, Eric Matthews for yet more *Gods* tips, and to Elvis for the inspiration (thankyouverymuch).

COMPETITION WINNER: Oh dear, what a dismal performance. Last month we asked for an original game idea based on a previously unlicenced movie. And what did we get? Three pathetic entries. No thanks to Graeme Wilson of Wigan for *Look Who's Talking* - in which you have to kill your parents. Or to the two other chumps who came up with *Pathinder* (plenty of eco-friendly opportunities there) or *The Sound of Music* (mutilate the whole Von Trapp family). If things don't improve, we're going to scrap these Contents comps you know...

THIS MONTH'S COMPO: Since it's still the summer season,we'd like you to send us the bestest postcard you can find. Software prizes will be awarded for the most exotic, the most puerile, and the most outrageous...

AMIGA POWER comes to you from Future Publishing, the stunningly successful (blah) publishers of Britain's biggest (and best!) 'leisure' computing magazines. There's Amiga Format, Amiga Shopper, ST Format, Your Sinclair, Commodore Format, Amstrad Action, New Computer Express, Sega Power, PC Plus, PC Answer and 8000 Plus on the computing side. Classic CD, Needlecraft and Mountain Biking UK on the non-computer side. Coming soon: PC Format and Public Domain. (Hurrah!)

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10 TRUE STORIES

Why is *Captain Planet* available two months before its official release date? Will *RoboCop III* be the biggest Amiga game yet? When will we see *Captive II*? And what the hell are Motorhead doing here? PLUS Code Masters get the Crib Sheet treatment, Oh Dear gets its teeth into *STUN Runner*, and the Rock Hard Quiz gets even tougher...

17 THE CHARTS

F15 Strike Eagle II is flying high, and there's a surprise hit from Amiga gaming's new boys Team 17. Find out what's winning, and what's getting stuffed in this months top 100 Gallup charts...

43 COMPLETE CONTROL

It's the biggest and most reliable Amiga hints and tips section around. This month: Part Two of our gigantic guide to *Gods* and *Prince and Persia*. And, of course, much much more...

56 PETER MOLYNEUX...

... What have you done? Just what is happening with the post-*Populous* god-sim revolution?

GAMES OF THE M

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Goofy god simulator from those Image Works folk. Page 21

THE SIMPSONS
Is the biggest licence of 1991 actually any good? Page 26

BLADE WARRIOR
Finally, the shadow swordplay mini-epic arrives. Page 32

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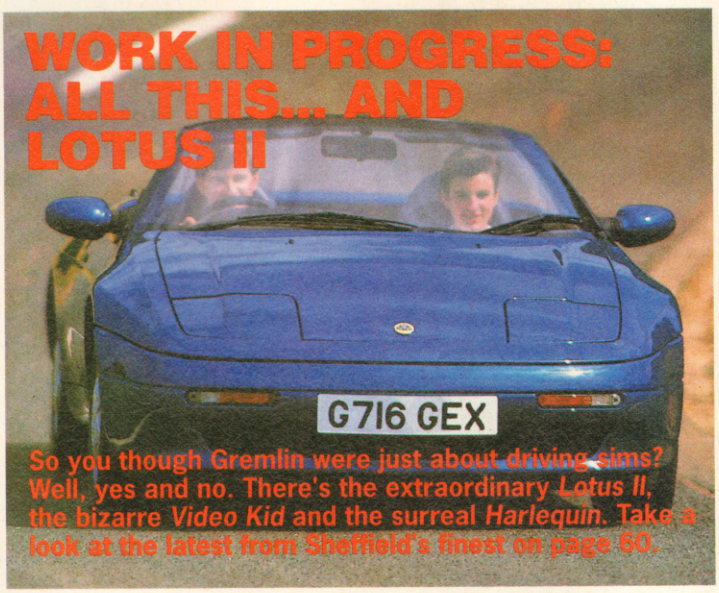
Ocean get airy fairy with their new arcade adventure. Page 34



66 IF WE'D KNOWN THEN...

Lemmings is the most talked about game of the year, but what of the men responsible? We find out.

89 DO THE WRITE THING

We asked for less praise, and we sure as hell got it. There's obtuse opinions, criticism of the AMIGA POWER reviewing team, and more besides.

95 THE BOTTOM LINE

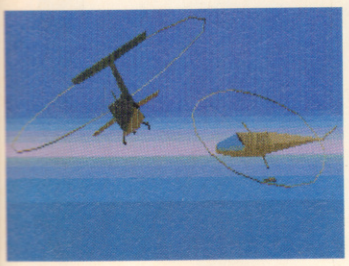
Reviews, reviews and more reviews. Snappy and informative summaries on nearly 300 of last year's top games. At a glance you can see what's worth splashing out for and what to avoid.

103 WHO ON EARTH DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

It's your chance to tell us what you reckon to just about anything you fancy. Yes, it's the AMIGA POWER reader survey where we pick your brains, and you give us a piece of your mind (ahem). You could also win a colour monitor, on page 103.

OVER 300
GAMES RATED IN EVERY ISSUE!

E MONTH



AH-37M THUNDERHAWK
Arcade 3D chopper sim from high flying Core Design. Page 28

NEBULUS 2
Good as the original? Or an over-worked waste of time? Page 36

GAUNTLET III
It may be in three dimensions, but does it have depth? Page 40

106 SECOND OPINION

Once again we pose that interesting – and just a little awkward – question 'What do you really think of the state of current Amiga releases?' This month's man with the answers – Gremlin software production person Sean Kelly.

NEXT MONTH!

Just in time for the tail end of the holiday season come the AMIGA POWER post cards! Send them to your friends! Stick them on your walls! Do something else with them we haven't quite thought of yet! All will be revealed next issue!

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disk FIVE

Introducing the fifth AMIGA POWER Cover Disk, which is, as always, jammed to bursting with the best in playable software. This month we've lifted the whole first level from Psygnosis' long awaited fantasy beat-'em-up *Barbarian II* – it's just as impressive for its size and playability as it is for its pristine graphics and animation. Also on offer are five – yes, five! – full games from the fertile pastures of Public Domain. We've picked the best of an excellent recent crop for a veritable Public Domain special, including the immensely playable *Asteroids*-inspired *Amigoids*. It's all explained below...

AND THIS IS DISK FIVE

BARBARIAN II

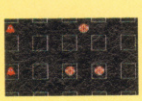
Psygnosis brings the well loved punch, hack and slay genre into the '90s with this very impressive mix of exploration, violence, and arcade adventure. It's the follow-up to the enormously successful *Barbarian*, and we've got a full level of it here, allowing it plenty of space to show just what it can do.

Looking quite different to the first *Barbarian* game, it puts you in control of a beefy muscle man, working your way through a pretty (but pretty treacherous) forest, populated almost entirely by the usual bunch of moronic brutes, zealous swordsmen, and suitably psychotic wolfmen. Lots of fighting to be done then, but there're also quite a few traps to be avoided, weapons to be collected and so on. Want to know more? We explain all over the page...

PLUS! THE PICK OF PD!

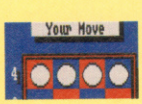
AMIGOIDS Or *Asteroids* by another name – graphically gorgeous, and packed with added extras not found in the original, this new PD version of the arcade classic should keep you glued to the screen for hours.

METAGALACTIC LLAMAS As will *Metagalactic Llamas*, an action packed arcader based on the ancient Jeff Minter classic and starring – you guessed it! – a llama. Fast and furious fun.



XFIRE Ridiculously quick and ridiculously frustrating grid-based shoot-'em-up – if you can survive more than about ten seconds you're doing a lot better than us!

KING Nicely implemented card-based patience game – just right for those quiet moments when *Amigoids* and the *Llamas* have started to make your trigger-finger ache.



RAPS A draughts-based puzzler that's as simple as they come – but don't make the classic mistake of equating the word 'simple' with the word 'easy'!

Want to know more? Then flick the page, quick...

disk FIVE

HOW TO GET GOING

Loading up any of the programs on the AMIGA POWER Cover Disk should prove to be a fairly painless experience. Here's exactly what you have to do, cut up into nice'n'easy bite-size stages...

1) First off, make sure you've got a mouse plugged into Joystick Port One and a joystick plugged into Joystick Port Two.
2) Switch your computer off, insert the disk into your internal drive (making sure there isn't already one in there of course!), and switch the machine back on.
3) Ta-da! After a short delay you should be greeted with the disk menu screen. Now chose which game or demo you want to play, then either press the appropriate Function Key, or move the mouse onto the correct small box and click on it with the left mouse button, to load up the game.
4) Your chosen game should now load and run, though just to be on the safe side we recommend you don't remove the disk from the drive during play.

AND WHAT TO DO IF EVERYTHING COMES TO A STOP

Oh dear, having problems with your disk? Not to worry – simply follow these easy steps towards getting everything running smoothly again and all will be fine...

1) First off, try loading the whole thing again from scratch, ensuring you don't have any extra peripherals attached to your Amiga. You'll be amazed at the difference it can make...
2) If the disk seems to be corrupt you may be able to rescue it using the Disk Doctor program from the Workbench disk that came with your Amiga. (Instructions for using Disk Doctor can be found in your Amiga user's manual).
3) If all else fails, simply send the disk back to us (including details of your equipment configuration would help out our trouble shooting department) at the address below and we'll rush out a new one to you as soon as possible. Please send the disk ONLY, not the whole magazine, and include a stamp addressed envelope. The address is: *AMIGA POWER Disk Five Returns, Disk Copy Labs plc, Unit A, West March, London Road, Daventry NN4 4SA.*

BARBARIAN II

Publisher: Psygnosis
Authors: Mike Chiltern (code) and Garv Corbett (graphics).

This playable preview is the full first level of *Barbarian II*, a sophisticated beat-'em-up featuring loads of enemies, plenty of scraps, a plethora of swords, oodles of collectable goodies to pick up, and, erm, plenty more stuff we've probably forgotten to mention, but will surely become apparent as you play the game.

The original *Barbarian* was a smash hit due to the appeal of its typically-Psygnosis presentation, the depth of its gameplay and its useful combat sequences, though, judging by this demo, the sequel takes everything a few steps on. In fact, we'd go so far as to say there's more fun to be had out of this preview than many a full length game...

Take that, you fiend! Slightly lacking in the sword department at this stage, the Barbarian takes on the thug with his bare hands. (He'd better find a blade pretty soon, we reckon).

SO WHAT EXACTLY'S GOING ON?

Well some, at least, is obvious. The game is set in a particularly organised and well-tended forest, your route laid out clearly by a maze of easy-to-follow pathways. It's up to you to move the barbarian character around and explore your location – within seconds you'll be squaring up to the first bad guys, and unless you know how to deal with these suckers you could find the game ending right there and then.

So, who do you have to fight? Well, there are three types of enemy on this first level – the bog-standard street-fighting brutes, the heavily armoured swordsmen and the vicious wolfmen. At first you've no weapons so your best bet is to steam in with both fists and feet flying. Your character is much more mobile than the enemies – which should give you an edge – though they are resilient beggers and it'll take two or three hits to put them down.

The swordsmen, once disposed of, will drop bags of gold, and more importantly, their weapons. You can pick up the gold by simply walking over it, but to pick up a sword you'll have to stand above it and press the space bar on your Amiga. There's no point in crouching down, as you might expect – this won't do anything at all.

Just as your life bar diminishes as you take strikes from enemies, so does the potency of your sword as you kill more and more of them – if you're looking for a logical explanation, just image it's getting blunt (or something). Anyway, it's worth picking up new swords wherever possible. You can see how strong your sword is by the indicator bar situated just beneath your life bar on the left hand side of the control panel.

363 gold coins accrued so far – we're doing quite well here, really. The chest reveals nothing, so it's time to bash some more baddies.

Dotted around the forest are treasure chests which open as you pass them. Some of these are empty, but it's best to open them all, because one or two have treats to offer. The first is a broadsword which will take out those difficult-to-deal-with wolfmen without too much bother. These guys are armed with razor sharp claws on hands and feet, so it's very easy to see the advantages of keeping your distance.

Don't be tempted into always fighting with your sword though. Sometimes, when the power of your blade is worn, it's worth dropping the sword (by pressing the space bar again) and giving the bad guy a good kick. You can then pick your sword up again and continue to use it. It might be worth practicing this first though – it's no use discovering you're a bit dodgy in the sword-picking-up-stakes in the heat of a battle.

Finally, another treasure chest contains a magic potion which is well worth picking up – it'll supply you with a few extra units of life expectancy.

WHAT ABOUT THE MONEY?

Ah, yes, there's cash involved too. The gold indicator will tell you how much lolly you've picked up from dead soldiers – you start off with 300 pieces. The money isn't any good to you in this demo, admittedly, but it's interesting to see how

WHAT SHOULD WE FIND LYING AROUND BUT...

WEAPONS: Swords and daggers are left behind by dead enemies, although a good broadsword can be found in one of the treasure chests. To pick up, stand above the sword, and press the space bar. Remember that the more you use a sword, the less efficient it becomes. Eventually it will break, at which point you'd better collect a new one – and pretty blooming fast!

GOLD: Also left behind by enemies, you simply have to walk over the bags to put them in the kitty. These are usually worth between 20 and 30 gold pieces.

MAGIC POTION: This can be found in a treasure chest. Just walk over it, and your life expectancy will increase slightly.

WHAT'S EXACTLY WHAT IN BARBARIAN II

much you can collect. In the full game you would normally take your profits to the village shop in the next level and use it to buy extra weapons. These include a crossbow, a bow and arrow, a helmet, or some magic potion. You'll notice the two square indicators to the right of the control panel – later in the game these let you know how many arrows or crossbow bolts you have left.

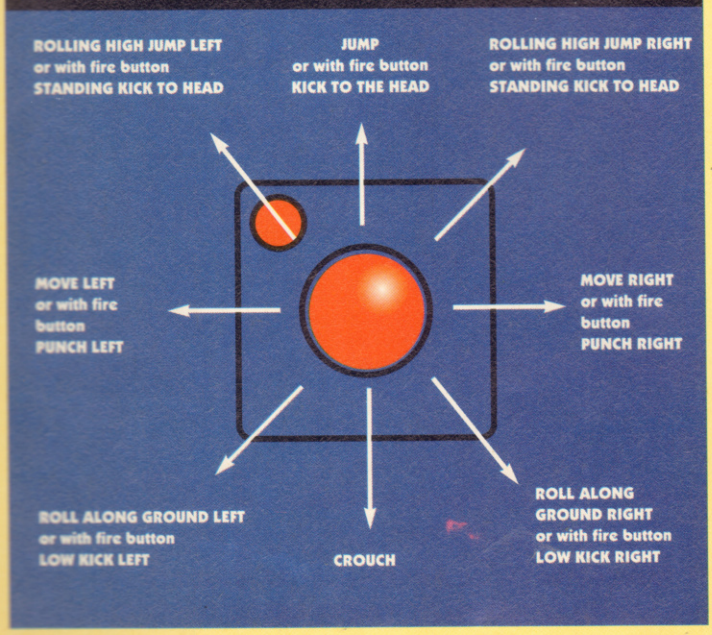
Watch out for the little green goblin, too; he's a canny thief. He can appear and disappear at will, and needs only to pass over your character to pinch some gold pieces. Because he can disappear into thin air, it's not easy to waste this blighter, but it is worth making the effort – if you bother him, he'll take his time coming back.

HOW TO STAY ALIVE

Being killed is usually a matter of losing all the energy from your life bar in fights, but there are other ways to be terminated too. Keep an eye out for a cute little fairy, for instance – below where she flies there will be a hidden trap in the ground. Fall down there and it's spike city a la *Prince of Persia*.

Likewise, if any of the swordsmen get a lucky shot in they'll be able to chop your head clean off. Don't let them if you can help it – it's much more fun to separate their bonces from their bodies yourself. In fact, it's not at all dissimilar to the widely acclaimed effect from Palace's *Barbarian I* and *II*, a couple of similarly (well, alright, identically) named products which aren't related to the Psygnosis series.

BARBARIAN II CONTROLS



WHAT COMES NEXT?

A-ha! That would be telling! Oh, alright them. In the complete version of the game you'd go straight into the village once this level was completed, then through various other sections that take you underground through caverns, into a castle, and beyond to the temple where the evil emperor (and the end-of-the-game) hangs out.

Barbarian II features some 50 different enemies in all, including dinosaurs, demons and some giant spiders – all in all they make for 2,000 frames of sprite animation. This demo includes the spooky forest noises which provide an atmospheric soundtrack to the game, though the music has been left off here. As is usual with Psygnosis games, there will be a (no doubt impressive) start of game demo, though there was no way we could cram that onto the cover disk. And finally, the game will be out any time now priced £25.99 (for all those impressed enough to want to buy it).

YOUR GUIDE TO THE FOREST NASTIES

BRUTE: He's a bit of a pussycat really and a couple of good kicks to the head or a few well aimed punches will see him off. He's dumb enough to stand around when you go for him too, so – all told – he shouldn't cause you too many problems, really.

GUARD: Armed with a sword and protective armour, this guy is pretty mean – you have to be careful not to get your head chopped off. He's not too tough for comfort though – our barbarian hero is capable of killing him without a weapon, although a good sword makes the job a lot easier. He leaves behind his weapons and a bag of gold when he dies.

WOLFMAN: Extremely fast, and equipped with razor sharp claws, he's probably the toughest baddie you'll meet. Clever enough to try and avoid your punches, he's best killed with a flying kick, or a blow from the collectable broadsword. Whatever happens, don't let yourself get trapped between two or more of these – your life expectancy will just slip completely away.

GOBLIN: A thief who (annoyingly) can't be killed as such. When he passes through your sprite, your collection of gold diminishes. Give him a hard time though and he'll leave you alone for a while, but it's worth staying clear if you are in trouble with other enemies when he shows up. He'll appear and disappear at will, but – other than nicking your cash – won't be able to harm you.

FAIRY: Not really an enemy, but worth keeping an eye out for – she indicates invisible traps set in the ground beneath you. If you see her, don't pass underneath where she's flying – find yourself a different pathway to get yourself where-ever it is you want to go instead.

disk FIVE

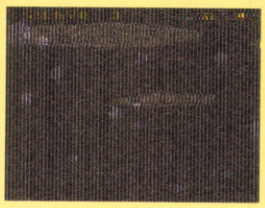
AMIGA POWER PRESENTS THE BEST OF PD

DAD COMPETITION

Okay, okay, no more entries for the *Dad* competition, please! We were deluged with solutions for this cute little puzzle game from our Issue Four Cover Disk, including written solutions, diagrams, disks, solutions written on 70 betting slips, and even a videotape! We had one letter claiming to offer conclusive proof that the game was in fact impossible – we can sympathise, but our bulging mailbag proves otherwise. The winner was Mr. Chris O'Halloran from Tunbridge Wells, who'll be receiving five brand spanking new games through the post some time in the next six months, if our usual level of organisation prevails. But enough of that, and on with the solution for everyone out there who's still hopelessly stuck (like we are here).

Green down, green down, blue right, red up, red left, top green left then down, blue down, yellow left, yellow up, red up, red up, green right, green right, blue down, yellow down, yellow left, red up, red up, left green up, right green left, red down, red right, green up (are you still with us?), green up, red left, red down, top green right then down, yellow right, yellow up, green left, green left, yellow down, yellow right, right green up then left, yellow left, yellow left, red up, red right, blue right, green down (hello Mum), green down, red right, red up, top green left then down, red down, red down, yellow left, yellow up, blue up, green right, green right, red down, red down, yellow down, yellow left, blue up, right green up then left, red left, red down, blue right, listen to cute little tune, jump up and down, and – swipe me! – you've done it!

AMIGOIDS

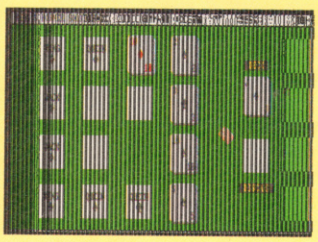


***Asteroids* revisited – it's the rather brill *Amigoids*.**

Okay, hands up everybody who doesn't know how to play *Asteroids*. Thought as much. Right, in *Asteroids* (for that's what *Amigoids* is, no more, no less), you control a spaceship in the middle of a storm of space rocks. You have to shoot the rocks into dust, as well as the nasty little enemy ships which zip onto the screen and take potshots at you occasionally. You use the joystick to rotate your ship left and right, thrust by pressing forward, and fire by hitting, um, fire.

There are lots of other options in this version, but most of them are pretty self-explanatory (use the joystick to control the menu screen, for instance). The only thing you really need to know is that if you attempt to load in one of the alternative graphic sets, the screen may display a box reading 'Volume *Amigoids* is write protected' or something similar. If this happens, don't worry –simply click on the 'Cancel' box and then progress exactly as normal.

KING



***King*: A relaxing game of patience, written by Elvis maybe? (Crap joke).**

Or to give it its Sunday name, *King's Korner Solitaire*. *King* is a patience game, played with the standard 52-card deck, and using mouse control. Cards are turned over from the face-down deck one at a time and placed onto one of the spaces on a 4x4 grid according to this set of rules:

1. No card may be placed onto a space already occupied by another card.
2. Face cards must be played on spaces labelled for their type and suit. Kings are placed on the four corner spaces, Queens on the top and bottom rows, and Jacks on the sides.
3. Non-face cards may be placed on any space (according to Rule 1).

Once placed on the grid, no card may be moved to any other space on the grid. Cards are discarded from the grid to the 'discard' (as opposed to 'datcard', presumably) pile according to THIS set of rules:

1. No card may be discarded while a deck card is face up until that deck card has been played.
2. No face card may be discarded.
3. Any Ten may be discarded by itself.
4. Any two cards whose face value adds up to exactly 10 may be discarded (Aces count as 1).

The spaces in the centre of the grid are known as free spaces. Selecting the number of these sets the difficulty level of the game. With four free spaces the game is at its easiest setting, and with no free spaces it's practically impossible.

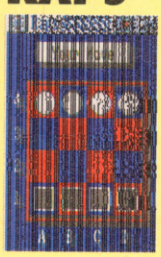
When the first card of a pair is chosen for discard, it will be moved to the discard pile face up, unless it's a Ten. Click on another card for discard, or click on the discard pile to replace the first card and try again.

If the grid is full and no discard is possible, then you lose.

If a face card is drawn and its space is occupied, then you lose.

If all cards have been played and all non-face cards have been discarded, the moon is in the seventh quadrant of Gemini, there's an 'R' in the month and it's exactly 17 minutes past four on the third Tuesday in July and you're sitting comfortably, then – gulp! – YOU'VE DONE IT! (It's a more than the AMIGA POWER 'lot' can manage, for sure.)

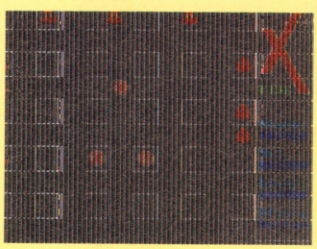
RAPS



***Raps*: Compact and remarkably handy.**

Here's a little Workbench oddity which just about everyone in the world seems to be able to beat except Stuart Campbell. *Raps* is a sort of variant on draughts, but played on a 4x4 board, and where the sole object is to get one of your pieces to the opposite side of the board before the computer does. The rules are the same as draughts, except that there are no multiple jumps, and when you're in a position to take a piece you MUST take it. And that's, as they say, it. Next!

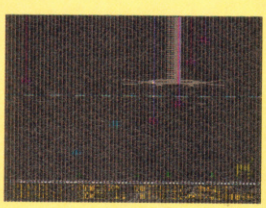
X-FIRE



***X-Fire*: Bizarre, original, and just a little bit excellent.**

What do you mean, we're running out of space? Er, for the complete lowdown on *X-Fire*, why not turn to the PD section on page 84? It's got everything you need to know and more. Honest.

METAGALACTIC LLAMAS – BATTLE AT THE EDGE OF TIME



And this month's VIC-20 classic: and yes, it's a Jeff Minter oldie!

'What, another Jeff Minter game? How much is he paying you lot anyway?'

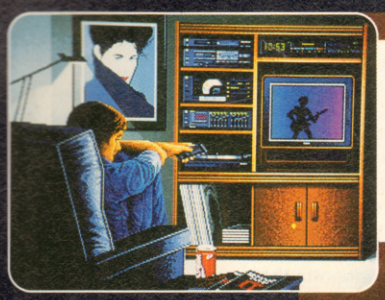
This is, amazingly, yet another conversion of an old (is there any other kind?) VIC-20 game by the yak-loving hippy, and features spiders, a llama (no surprises there), and that's about everything.

You steer your llama left and right along the bottom of the screen (exiting from either side causes it to reappear at the opposite side) and fire bolts of, er, llama spit at the deadly spiders which are descending from the top of the screen. Hitting the spiders kills them, but if you miss and hit their web strand instead they fall to the ground and come after your furry hero. But all is not lost. You also control a reflective barrier (using up and down on the joystick), which your offensive (in both senses) weaponry bounces off, enabling you to shoot things that are on the same level as you. Don't worry, it all proves to be frighteningly simple in practice.

And that's all there is to it. Later levels get horrifically difficult, but I'm sure there's someone out there tough enough to handle it...

Ultima VI

The False Prophet



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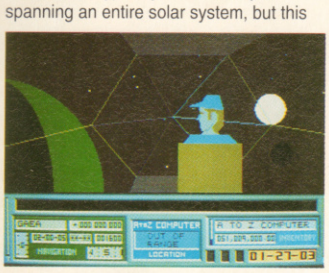
NEWS

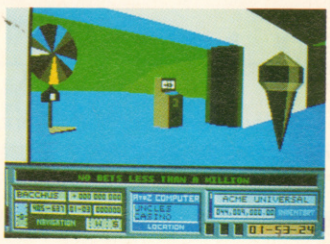
MERCENARY ON A MISSION

After a fairly quiet period, marked only by the 'low profile' release of *Encounter*, Novagen are gearing up for the latest title in the *Mercenary* saga.

Paul Woakes is once again the man behind the game, so fans of the series can expect more of the same – and much more besides. Using the familiar 'virtual world' filled 3D vector graphics of *Mercenary II – Damocles*, *Mercenary III* has another typically convoluted plot spanning an entire solar system, but this time the inclusion of air combat and fully animated character interaction (complete with facial expressions) promises to widen its appeal.

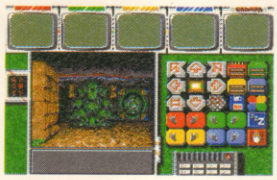


Characters faces are animated, but you're bound to get sick of this guy, he's a taxi driver...



It's that familiar Woakes feeling again in *Mercenary III*. But expect some more character interaction and, well, fun, this time around..

Indeed, Novagen claim that the desolate, 'insular' feel of the first two is a thing of the past. Whether *Mercenary III* will be a game to appeal to all, or just the usual Woakes fan-base remains to be seen. Expect a release shortly.



***Captive*: More role playing and alien bashing next year. (Hurrah!)**

CAPTIVE'S RETURN

While we're on the subject of Tony Crowther (see main news story), some fans of *Captive* may be asking themselves: 'Will there be a sequel to this masterpiece of dingy space-dungeon exploration?'. The answer is a booming great 'YES!'

Tony's heading straight back to role-playing land again with a sequel provisionally called (ahem) *Captive II*. Apparently, it's going to be so gigantic that our Tone can't handle all the work himself. 'I'm looking for a helper who knows how to code, and is an expert on role-playing games,' he said. Expect *Captive II* to emerge in about a year's time.

Meanwhile, the overworked Mr Crowther is also developing a game based on the *Knightmare* TV series, once again using an updated version of the game engine used in *Captive*.

PHILIPS' AMAZING FLYING MONITOR!

Anyone who plays Amiga games through a TV set must list a colour monitor as a pretty high shopping priority. 'Market-leading' monitor people Philips, who realise this, have just started really chasing after games players' lolly with their latest promotion. The Dutch consumer electronics giants are giving away a copy of MicroProse's wild flight sim *F19 Stealth Fighter* with their newly launched CM8833 / II model.

This is the 'upgraded' version of what is apparently European Amiga owners' favourite monitor. Part of the promotion includes a bunch of competitions to be run over the three month promotion period (that's from now until Christmas), with prizes including the chance to pilot one of those proper flight simulators airline pilots use for training.

Not to be outdone, we've arranged a wee competition of our own. Find out how you can win the colour monitor with flight sim (normal price £270) – not to mention help out AMIGA POWER – by turning to our Reader Survey on page 103. Over and, er, out...

WHAT ON EARTH IS CAPTAIN PLANET PLAYING AT?

Anyone out there itching to get their hands on Tony Crowther's much-hyped *Captain Planet* may be surprised to learn that the game is already available. Well, sort of...

An early version of the environmentally aware platformer has been bundled with new Amiga 500s. Commodore's so-called 'Cartoon Pack' also features a one meg expansion (now standard issue with new A500s), a one meg only version of *The Simpsons* (reviewed this issue) plus the ever-popular *Lemmings*. (It also comes with a special copy of Amiga Format, complete with a page in it explaining how great AMIGA POWER is, but the less said about that the better).

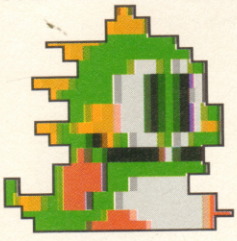
So what's the story? Well, *Planet*'s publisher Mindscape insist that the game in the box is not the same as that which will be available to the rest of us later in the autumn. Programmer Crowther (also responsible for the excellent *Captive*) has been instructed to come up with some extra loading screens and a few graphical improvements for the stand-alone version, though differences are likely to be cosmetic, and radical changes are most unlikely.

So what is the game like? Well, it's a platformer all right, with a nice line in neat graphical tricks, and enough colour to fill a South American street carnival. The gameplay isn't really anything special (though it's kind of fun), and we're impressed enough to have persuaded Mindscape to stick a playable demo on AMIGA POWER's October cover-disk. As you would expect from a conversion of such a seriously earnest TV cartoon, the game features plenty of missions which put you up against 'eco-villains', and your enemies and obstacles are all products of man's careless attitude to the environment (etcetera etcetera).

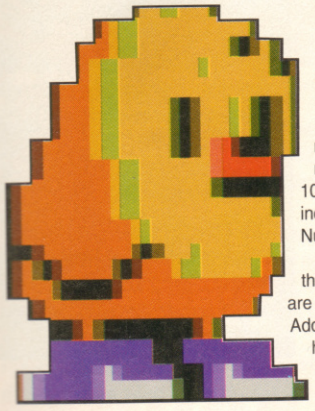
On the changes to the 'street' version, Crowther said: 'It will be different, but not enormously so. The extra loading screens will show you how to play the game, which will be good. I think on the whole the game is excellent – very playable.'

FLUFFY ALERT!

Three of the cutest (and bestest) games ever are to be re-released – in the same box. Ocean are launching a new compilation label (called Addicted To Fun) with the tempting offer of *The New Zealand Story*, *Rainbow Islands* and *Bubble Bobble* all packaged up together as the first release. At £19.99 for the lot, this works out at an extremely reasonable £6.60-odd per game – not bad for a trio of All-Time Top 100 games, especially when it includes *Rainbow Islands*, our Number One.



Rainbow Islands – bestest,
Bubble Bobble – cutest,
The NZ Story – (ahem) cheep-est



A spokesman for Ocean had this to say for himself: 'These game are all along the cutesy line. Future Addicted To Fun releases will also have a common theme.' Quite how they think they can possibly top this pack remains to be seen...

DIAL A FLIGHT SIM!

Multi-player games are a 'big thing' in the United States, where lots of people from all over the country can sit at home, connect their machines to the telephone system, and start flying aircraft or plotting nasty deeds against people from the other side of the country who they've never met. Naturally, the phenomenon has reached Europe.

On-line Entertainment have set up a system licensed from America which features three games. To play you need a computer, a telephone, a modem (if you don't know what that is imagine a telephone for computers) and some money...

By dialing into On-line's mainframe computer, you get to sample a space trading game, a weird *Dungeons And Dragons*-type thing, or a flight simulation.

Only *Air Warrior* (the latter option) features graphics, and we reckon this is the game that will prove most popular. Playing costs £1.50 per hour plus the normal charge to London from your home (which can work out to be enormously expensive).

You can pay by opening an account by cheque or credit card. Youngsters must (of course) have their parents' permission.

On-line's Clem Chambers explained: 'It's just awesome to be flying around and fighting people you can't see. There's nothing like it.' We shall see...

CRIB SHEETS

It's another behind-the-scenes peek at the people who come up with the games. This month we're quizzing...

No5 CODE MASTERS

History: Set up in October 1986 by two fresh-faced programmers David and Richard Darling. The teenage twosome had been banging out budget games for Mastertronic for some time before doing their own thing. A series of cheap and fun titles, coupled with extraordinary media attention, ensured almost instant success. Perhaps even more impressively, they've managed to continue it pretty much unabated.
People: The Codies employ about 30 full time staff with about half working on game production. Enjoys a positive relationship with many programmers in the freelance community.
Greatest successes: The ever-popular Dizzy series has never failed to attract Amiga gamers, and *CJ's Elephant Antics* has been a winner.
Biggest cock-ups: The Codies started life in the 8-bit zone, and early attempts to convert to the Amiga were, at best, disappointing. They admit that games like *BMX Simulator* didn't make the most of the more sophisticated hardware.
What they're all about: Over to Code Masters' mouthpiece Mike Clarke: 'We're only interested in games people will buy. Something like a mountain bike simulator would be much more appealing than anything more esoteric.

The Darling Bruvs: Clean cut

We're not Electronic Arts and we like it that way.'
That budget debate: Code Masters are famed for giving full price publishers a hard time. Back to Mike: 'We don't believe there's any reason why games should be so expensive. We operate on a sensible price level rather than one which is largely artificial. And yes, that means we wouldn't put our prices up if we thought we could get away with it. It was with the greatest reluctance that we took the £1 jump to £7.99.'
Typical game: Normally has the word 'Simulator' in the title. Codies games are of a remarkably consistent quality which can normally guarantee they'll be a good buy, especially for younger players. Never ones to go for games which are risque or daring (or would take long to develop), their back catalogue of largely racing and platform games can perhaps best be compared to Saturday morning television.
Things to come: Stock car romp *Mean Machines* should be with us any time now, followed by *Quick Snax*, the predictable follow-up to *Fast Food*. There's also *Spiky in Transilvania* to be be released next month.
Final Word: Despite the media overkill of the past few years, the Codies are a nice enough bunch without big business pretensions. Things would be pretty stale without them.

THE FALCON FLIES AGAIN

Spectrum Holobyte's well loved flight sim *Falcon* is to be re-released along with the two mission disks which came out after its original launch two and a half years ago. *Falcon – The Classic Collection* offers flight and fight fans a total of 36 missions. It's out any time now from Mirrorsoft priced £34.99.

SOUNDS FAMILIAR

If Amiga games music is 'your thing' (it could happen) then it might be worth checking out two CDs recently launched by Digital Dreams. They feature the soundtracks to 'The Very Best Of' Gremlin and Psygnosis titles and cost £7.99 each or £14.99 for the pair. For more information write to: Digital Dreams, 31, Berwick Street, Soho, London, WC1.

LOUD, OBNOXIOUS, AND ON THE AMIGA...

Will Lemmy out-sell the *Lemmings*?

Yes, we're afraid it's true. Lemmy and chums from rock'n'roll tunesters Motorhead are to appear in a computer game! The publisher responsible, Virgin, reckon there are gamers a-plenty who like nothing better than Motorhead's world famous, and utterly mesmerising, din, while their larger than life personas give plenty of opportunity for (ahem) 'interesting' gameplay opportunities.

So what's it all going to be about? No programmers have been selected for the job as yet, but we're assured that the game will be packed with humorous touches, and a splurge of music. The song *Ace of Spades* is almost certain to be featured.

So why Motorhead? Over to Virgin's Andrew Wright: 'At computer shows there are always loads of people wearing black T-shirts printed with heavy metal band logos, so there's obviously an enormous crossover. There are heavy metal bands who are more famous than Motorhead – like Guns and Roses and Iron Maiden – but Motorhead have been around for a long time, and they just refuse to go away.

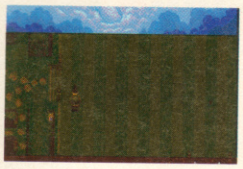
'The other appealing factor is Lemmy and the band's sense of humour. There's none of this sexist nonsense on their album covers or pseudo devil worshipping. It's all tongue-in-cheek. We want that humour to come over in the game.'

Virgin are well placed to deliver the goods. They're the only people brave enough to tackle slightly near-the-knuckle humour in Amiga games, and have fared reasonably well with *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and *Viz. Motorhead* (the game) should be ready by Easter, but in the meantime we thought we'd share with you some classic Motorhead lyrics: 'Sky high and six thousand miles away, don't know how long I've been awake...'(Snip!)

SAFE EUROPEAN GNOME

There're no two ways about it – *The Magic Garden* is, well, weird. It's certainly different – your task, as a gnome living in a scrolling garden about three screens across and two deep, is to tend the flowers, plant the crops and generally keep things shipshape. It's not as easy as it sounds though – this being a 'magic' garden (hence the title), the flowers tend to run around if you neglect to water them, the fish have a habit of flying about the place if their pool dries out, and other, mischievous, gnomes have nothing better to do than whizz about trying to undo your good work.

On your side are a shed full of tools (you have pretty



A gnome alone – tending to *The Magic Garden*.

cavernous pockets, so you can carry a fair number of things around at a time), a greenhouse (where you can nurture weaker plants), and a network of caverns underneath the garden (so if, say, your vegetables seem to be getting dragged below the ground you can drop down the garden well, run around the caverns until you find the monster responsible and duff him up).

With over 300 objects to collect and use, seasons that come and go to affect your charges, a giant gnome god to be appeased most of the time, and a game task that apparently becomes increasingly clear as you play it, this is certainly an unusually-toned product.

'The environmental element will, we hope, appeal to a wider range of game players than most products,' says Electronic Zoo boss Stewart Bell, 'including the difficult-to-reach female game players. In some ways I'd say it's reminiscent of *Little Computer People*.'

Sonic: Amiga conversion stalled

SONIC GOSSIP

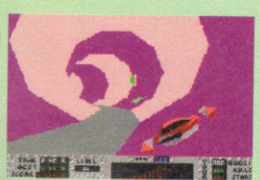
Sega console gamers are currently going a bit bonkers over the wonderful *Sonic the Hedgehog*, but what of US Gold's Amiga conversion? It seems that although Gold have the rights to transfer the so-called 'game of the decade' Sega still have not decided whether or not they can allow their baby onto standard home computer formats. The Japanese entertainments super-giants reckon keeping it exclusively on the Megadrive will enhance the console's reputation to such a degree that they're prepared to sacrifice all the money they could have made from Amiga and other versions.

Still, Gold reckon they could make the conversion work a treat, and they're still talking to Sega.

Oh dear...

Indeed, oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. There are good games, there are bad games, and then there are pieces of crap like...

No5 STUN RUNNER (Domark)



It's an arcade conversion, Jim. But not as we know it.

It's funny, isn't it? There are four billion people in the world (more or less). Three billion, nine hundred and ninety-nine million, nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred and eighty-four of them knew what it was that made Atari's amazing coin-op *STUN Runner* such a colossal success. In a statistically staggering and highly unlikely coincidence, the 16 people in the world who didn't know that the single most important thing in *STUN Runner* was the astonishing, breathtaking speed ALL WORKED FOR DOMARK! Thus it transpired that Domark embarked on a conversion doomed to failure from the very start. But could they pull it off against all the odds? What do you think?

The arcade game's graphics weren't especially remarkable, so in only messing them up a little bit Domark didn't commit any heinous crime. The gameplay (zip along a series of tunnels and shoot everything) was so simple that despite having a team of experts work on it night and day for several weeks, Domark couldn't manage to cock that up at all. So all that was left to worry about was the speed. All the experts said it couldn't be done, that the Amiga wouldn't be able to handle it, that the resulting game would limp along like a tranquilised slug with a dodgy leg, and hence be so completely tedious and unexciting as to be an absolutely pointless waste of time, money, the rainforest, the ozone layer, the advertising budget, fifty thousand blank disks, and human resources that could otherwise have been diverted to more useful and rewarding tasks. They were right, of course, but Domark released it anyway. The pitiful reviews and sales which followed were taken as conclusive proof by some people that there WAS a God, after all. Atheists, however, would be advised to watch out for the budget re-release, undoubtedly coming any day now. Save us...

SPORT FOR ALL

Electronic Arts are planning to deliver eight new courses for fans of its excellent *PGA Tour Golf*. They should be ready for Christmas. Meanwhile, plans are afoot for a conversion of *John Madden's Football* (that's American Football) which has transfixed Sega console gamers since its launch. Expect it to touch down early next year.

***PGA Tour Golf*: on course with eight new courses for fans of the fairway.**

ESSENTIAL ESPIONAGE

Due out in a couple of months from simulation kings MicroProse, is a sweet-looking spy game called *Covert Action*. You take the role of Max or Maxine Remington on a number of missions to neutralise terrorism, smuggling, extortion and all the usual sorts of stuff, by playing various sub-games including tricky puzzles, code-cracking, hot-pursuit driving chases through city streets, and the stealthy infiltration of various enemy buildings.

You can choose to work for the CIA, MI5, or any of a number of similar secret organisations, and your job will take you on journeys through 50 cities in three continents. We've had a peek at a pretty early version, and it looks set to be extremely interesting, if only because of the bizarre 'squatting turtle' pose your agent employs when hiding behind desks in enemy strongholds. Well worth a chuckle or two, we can tell you...

ROCK-HARD QUIZ

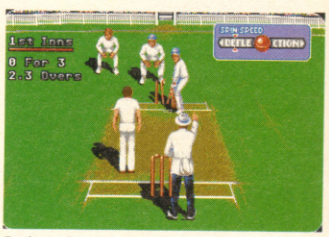
Compiled by Gary Penn

Welcome once again to the quiz which makes the questions in *Trivial Pursuit* seem all the more meaningful. Yes, this is the quizzical answer to the question: Is there life after death? (Let's hope the answer's a resounding NO if it means having to enjoy a quiz like this once every month). This month we have five more of the rockiest, hardest puzzles in the software world for you to answer. As ever, there are no prizes on offer – the only reward is the self-satisfaction of being just as much of a dullard as Gary Penn. Are you up to the challenge? Then press a button and gamble away ...

1) Heavy inert gaseous element in shoot-'em-up form.
2) John Carpenter's favourite blaster.
3) Kid gets spooked by trouser pouches – but not a lot!
4) Jason's crew get fresh with vectors.
5) Strange goings-on with REM.

All the amsers are game names – consider yourself elevated to a higher plane if you can identify the common link. All is revealed on page 14.

BOWLED OVER



***Graham Gooch*: Passes the test**

Amiga cricket games have traditionally been out for nought as far as we're concerned, but the latest delivery from Audiogenic looks as though it could change all that. *Graham Gooch World Class Cricket* is gorgeously illustrated and, if a little tricky to control at first, is way ahead of anything else in this notorious genre.

To bowl you're offered a square on the wicket to aim for, and you can control the spin and speed with the joystick. Batsmen will also see the square, and can be moved into an appropriate position to prepare for the ball. The game will be stepping out within the next few weeks for £29.99. Keep your eyes peeled.

SHOW TIME!

CES MOVES TO EARL'S COURT II...

Last year's CES: this time it's bigger, better, more...

Computer shows, doncha just love 'em? There are few quite so loveable as the European Computer Entertainment Show. If you're thinking of popping along, here are the details.

- It runs from Friday 6th September to Sunday 8th September with opening times of 9am to 6pm (5pm on Sunday).
- It's being held at the swish and rather huge Earls Court II.
- It'll cost £7 (yes, that's a massive seven pounds!) to get in.
- There'll be about 49,999 other people going along.
- Including a few pop stars who'll be doing their thing, along with some Radio One DJs and international footballers.
- Most of the big games software houses will be taking stands, and they'll all be keen to show off all their latest 'products'.
- There'll be tons of arcade machines all over the place.
- And a few activity competitions (we hear rumours of a *Kick Off* challenge).

Future Publishing (who publish AMIGA POWER, Amiga Format and Amiga Shopper amongst others) will be there, and you're more than welcome to pop along for a quick chat. See you there...

...WHILE THE AMIGA GETS ITS VERY OWN SHOW!

If you think CES sounds good, just wait 'til you see this! It's called Amiga Format Presents World Of Commodore Show and it's running on the 14-17 November (the first day is trade only). Venue is again the ultra-snooty Earl's Court II in London. Yes, at last the Amiga gets its very own show! We'll have full details in future issues, but just as a taster...

- Opening times are 9am to 5.30pm (4pm on the Sunday) and price is £6 adults, £4 under 14s (though you can pre book for £4.95 and £2.95 respectively).

World Of Commodore at Earl's Court II: more Amiga stuff in one place than you've EVER seen!

- Attractions include the Commodore Multimedia Theatre, a Games Arcade, CDTV City, technical seminars, plus game-play contests, experts and celebrity guests.
- All the big software houses will be there in force, with major stands taken by the likes of Ocean, EA, Virgin, MicroProse, Psygnosis, Gremlin and many more...
- Everything there will be to do with Commodore products and Commodore games, and of course the vast majority of that will be Amiga. If it's got anything to do with the Amiga, rest assured, it'll be there – and so should you!
- As you'll have guessed by the title, World Of Commodore is being organised by Future Publishing, publishers of Britain's top-selling leisure computer magazines, including Amiga Format, Amiga Shopper and – yes! – AMIGA POWER. We'll be there in force to make sure you have the best time at a show you'll ever have...

ocean
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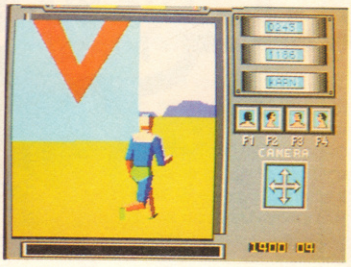
Technopolis: Keep the peace between budding civilizations



Cyber Assault: 3D battles in the 'play-for -your-life-gameshow-of-the-future' mould.

ARC ROLLS OUT FIVE

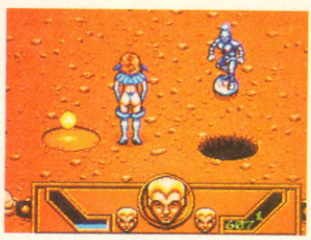
Atari's curious dedication to releasing games on the Amiga is set to continue this autumn with a fistful of new titles which are ready to roll. ARC – the ST manufacturer's games software people – are kicking off with *Cyber Assault*, a 3D assault course with a 'Running Man' plot, plenty of obstacles, and all manner of villains.

During the entire course you have no access to vehicles so this isn't so much a flight or tank simulation as a first person perspective humanoid sim.

On the wargames front there's a World War One sea-battle puzzler entitled *Dreadnought*. It's the fourth in the hugely popular (at least among wargamers) 'Battlescape' series, and features a battlefield designer.

Those two titles will have made an appearance by the end of October, after which you can expect to see a standard vertical shooter called *Brute* and a vertical *Defender*-type blast-'em-all by the name of *Blitz*. The difference here is that action takes place above a planet surface, as well as below in tubes and tunnels.

Finally, there's *Technopolis*. Written by Chris Pink it's an action strategy yarn in which you must colonise barren planets with skilled peoples from developed globes. Naturally, the colonisers fall out leaving plenty of scope for inter-settlement wars.



Brute: Up and at 'em in yet another vertically scrolling shoot-em-'up

ROCK HARD QUIZ THE ANSWERS

1) ***Xenon***
3) ***Xenon 2***
4) ***Magic Pockets***
4) ***Starglider***
5) ***Weird Dreams***

And of course the common link between the five answers is that all the games have appeared on television.

WORLD WISE

A *Universal Military Simulator (UMS) II Planet Editor* and two scenario disks are due to make an appearance any time now. *Planet Editor* allows you to create battlefields the size of the Earth itself complete with landscapes, climate, cities, and of course, armies. You can work out national alliances and rivalries and allocate weapons from bows and arrows to nuclear missiles.

The two *UMS II* scenarios are post *WWII South East Asia*, and *WWII Pacific*. It's one meg only, and the retail price has yet to be decided.

KICK OFF, RUGBY STYLE

Try and try again: The best rugger game to date?

At about the same time that the home countries set off for the Rugby World Cup, Domark will be releasing its very own game of the tournament.

Domark are already making enthusiastic noises about the game's 'exceptionally smooth' multi-directional scrolling with about one fifth of the pitch on screen at any one time. *Rugby: The World Cup* will be with us by the end of September priced £24.99.

RE-INVADING SPACE

Worth looking out for from the Domark camp is The Kremlin's conversion of coin-op *Super Space Invaders*. It's an amalgamation of all the best classics including a vastly improved *Invaders*, as well as *Galaxians*, *Phoenix* and *Gyruss*. It should arrive in the late autumn.

They're back, and they want our cattle!

AMIGA POWER RECOMMENDS

There's something for everyone and every pocket in this month's selection. You lucky people.

R-TYPE II (Activision)

If you thought Ocean's brilliant *Toki* was the last word in arcade conversions, think again. This superb piece of coding brings the arcade machine into your home like no other so far, and it's a wonderful game in its own right too. Gorgeous graphics, buckets of playability, and the best difficulty curve yet make this THE game for shoot-'em-up fans. If it's straight ahead blasting you're after, look no further.

JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND SNOOKER (Virgin)

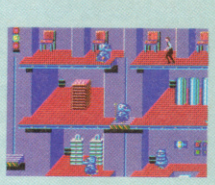
After the martial arts classic *IK+* you might expect a game programmed by Archer MacLean to be a bit special, and you wouldn't be disappointed with this. It plays a brilliant game of snooker, but the amazing 3D graphics, presentation, speed and slickness are simply out of this world. Well worthy of the equal-highest AMIGA POWER mark yet.

HUNTER (Activision)

It's been a long time coming, but if ever a game was worth the wait it's this one. The most convincing 3D world yet, coupled with immediately-grasped gameplay, means *Hunter* has 'playability' written all over it. 'Atmospheric' seems like too weedy a word for the awesome feel *Hunter* generates, but for now it'll have to do. The only other word you need to remember is 'buy'.

MANCHESTER UNITED EUROPE (Krisalis)

Office Man United fanatic Colin might be a little bit biased, but there's no denying the quality of this brilliant football game with just a touch of management sim thrown in. The graphics are absolutely lovely, but not at the expense of some of the most intuitive control and challenging gameplay seen in an Amiga sports game. For arcade football action, you can't do better.



IMPOSSIBLE MISSION II (Kixx)

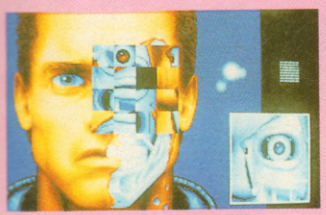
You don't have to pay out £25 to get a real classic this month. *Impossible Mission II*, the follow-up to one of the most popular 8-bit games of all time, didn't gain an awful lot in the translation to 16-bit, but the original platforms-and-puzzles game was so immensely addictive and unbelievably playable that hardly counts as a fault. A bargain and no mistake.

LLAMATRON (Jeff Minter)

Here's an odd thing, a game without a software house. The reason for this unusual turn of events is that cult hippy programmer Jeff Minter's latest game, a hugely violent update of the classic Williams coin-op *Robotron*, is a Shareware game, and hence available only from PD libraries. For all you jaded cynics out there, this could be the catalyst for a whole new world of fun software at sensible prices.

OCEAN GO WITH THE FLOW

MEAN MACHINE



Ugly puzzle: Help build Arnie's face

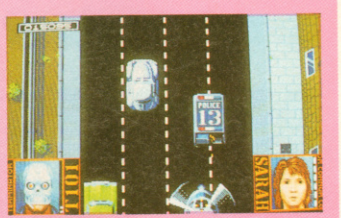
The same goes for his cybernetic hand.

Terminator II, for anyone who's been living with their head in their socks for the past few months, is another one of those deliciously violent sci-fi movie things featuring Arnold 'nobody gives me a raw deal' Schwarzenegger. Naturally, there's a game of the movie, and even more naturally, it features more weapons than you can shake at an international arms dealer.

There are eight sub-games in all – (take a deep breath) two puzzlers, three beat-'em-ups, two vehicle chasers and a sideways scrolling alleyway shoot-'em-up.

Ocean are the publisher, and it should be ready within the next couple of weeks.

Alley splatz: walking and shooting



Chopper chase: Destroy everything

20 SECONDS TO COMPLY

Robocop III could be squaring up with *The Simpsons* for the much cherished Christmas number one position. From what we've seen it's one of the most atmospheric games yet to grace the Amiga. Programmers 'did' have crafted some delicious animation of our hero, and movement is uncannily like the real thing.

Uphold the law: Getting ready to waste some robo-Ninjas

The plot has Robocop on the rampage against a corrupt police force and there's much cop killing to be done in cars, in hand-to-hand combat, in shoot-outs and in jet-pack scraps. The movie won't be packing them in until next April, but Ocean say it's important to get the game out before the Christmas period.

Protect the innocent: That Robocop car

Serve the public trust: Cop killing frenzy

Classified: Jet-pack slaughterfest

AND THERE'S MORE...

ABOVE: *Hudson Hawk*, Ocean's game of the critically-panned film (it's not THAT bad) sees Hawk running around the world in an attempt to steal the component parts of Da Vinci's Alchemy Machine, in a scrolling platform arcade adventure.

BELOW: Sensible Software's 'trip' into the spaced-out and surreal world of *Wizkid* looks set to be suitably wild and manic. Just watch out for that bizarre toilet scene..!

ocean

Acclaim entertainment, inc.

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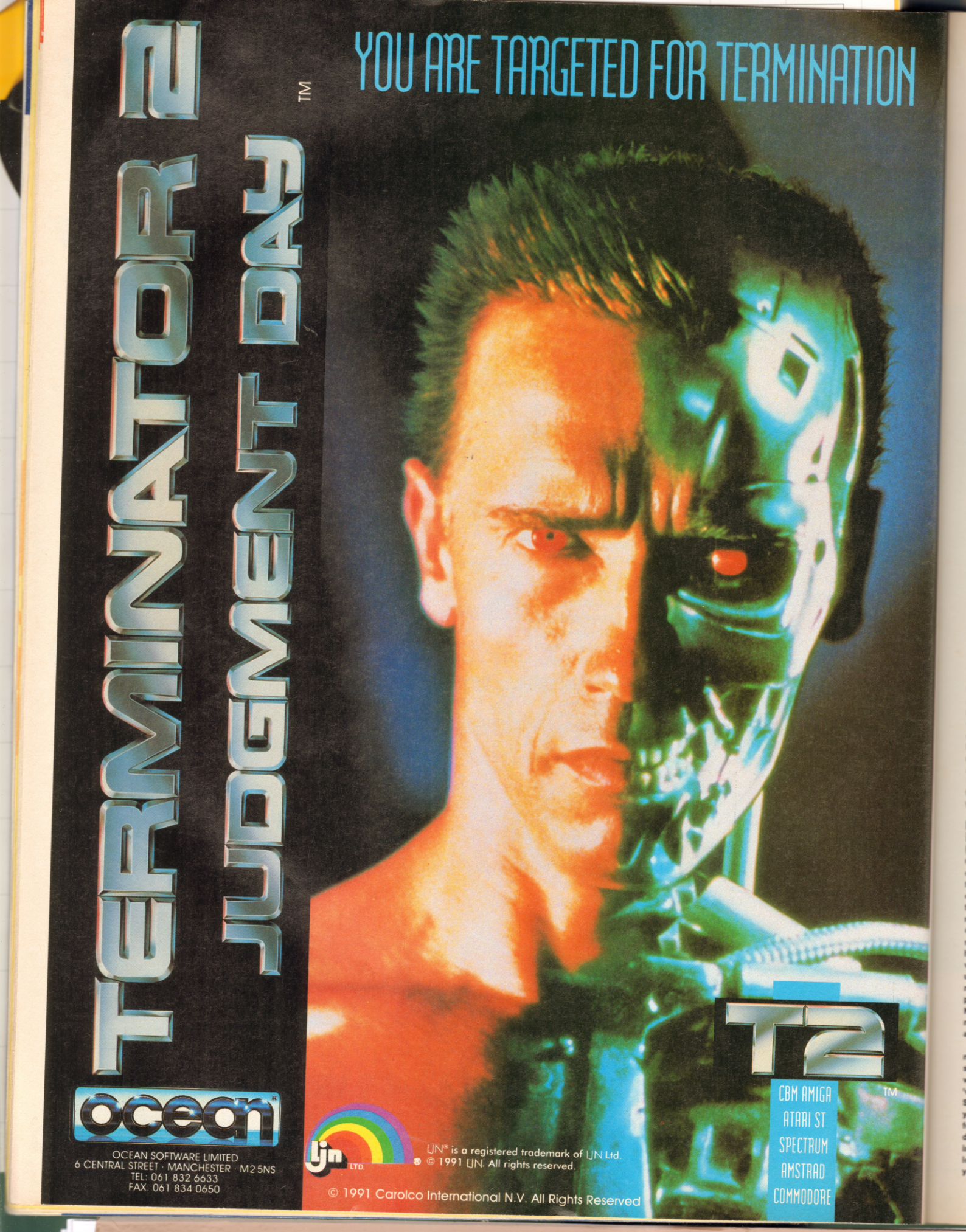
TERMINATOR 2
JUDGMENT DAY
TM
YOU ARE TARGETED FOR TERMINATION
T2
TM
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F-15 STRIKE EAGLE II (Hitting the heights)

It's no surprise that MicroProse's almost faultless flight sim has clambered to the top, and you can expect this to still be hanging around the charts in a year's time. MicroProse – who like to see themselves as purveyors of the most 'realistic' games – have a busy time ahead with all manner of military games on their way. Look out for *Knights of the Sky*, a World War One dogfight thriller which was most impressive on the PC. That's due in October along with the eagerly awaited submarine game *Silent Service II*.

Prose, we understand, are also working on a sequel to *F-19 Stealth Fighter* which will be even more 'realistic' than the original. That should be sneaking out in the spring of next year.

F-15 Strike Eagle II – Flying high

And there's yet another flying game in the offing, apparently with a drug busting slant. Provisionally called *F-23*, it casts you as a daring pilot up against all those awful South American smuggling types. Expect a November release.

FULL CONTACT (An incredible start for the Leeds little guys)

Team 17 are most definitely not one of the world's biggest publishers. When *Full Contact* went straight in at number two the Leeds-based boys 'went out and got very drunk'. *Full Contact* is a curious little beat-'em-up which manages to mix limited gameplay with some really quite lovely intro screens, and there's more to come. Watch out for *Alien Breed* in October, an *Ikari Warriors* style shoot-'em up. Then there'll be some full-price one meg titles to follow...

MANCHESTER UNITED EUROPE (The boys done well)

Chart watchers will be well aware of the poor quality of many football games which loiter ominously around the chart, and for fans of the genre the only respite has come from the *Kick Off* series (which, it has to be said, is losing its shine). Krisalis have scored well with *Man Utd*, which seems to have been universally welcomed as the nicest and most natural way to play computer soccer. So now Krisalis are emerging as the new masters of silicon soccer, what are they up to next?

It seems that England manager Graham Taylor has been signed up as the big name for what's being hyped as the 'definitive' football game. Scheduled for release early next year, it's a five disk monster featuring all major English domestic leagues, plus an international tournament. The idea is to 'do a Graham' and work your way up through the leagues

AMIGA POWER GALLUP CHARTS

AMIGA TOP 100

***** Exceptional **** Nearly there **** Very good *** Has its moments ** Flawed * Dire

1 (7) F-15 STRIKE EAGLE II MicroProse £29.99 *****

2 (18) FULL CONTACT Team 17 £9.99 ***

3 (NE) MANCHESTER UNITED EUROPE Krisalis £25.99 ****

4 (6) LOMBARD RAC RALLY Hit Squad £7.99 ***

5 (13) XENON 2 Mirror Image £9.99 *****

6 (2) THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND US Gold £29.99 *****

7 (1) EYE OF THE BEHOLDER US Gold £30.99 *****

8 (5) PGA TOUR GOLF Electronic Arts £25.99 *****

9 (9) NORTH AND SOUTH Action Sixteen £7.99 ****

10 (3) FANTASY WORLD DIZZY Code Masters ****

11 (12) LEMMINGS
Psygnosis £9.99 *****

12 (11) DEFENDER OF THE CROWN
Mirror Image £9.99 ***

13 (16) MIAMI CHASE Code Masters £7.99 ****

14 (NE) RUN THE GAUNTLET
Hit Squad £7.99 *

15 (8) 3D POOL Mirror Image £9.99 ****

16 (17) LITTLE PUFF IN DRAGONLAND
Code Masters £6.99 **

17 (20) NINJA RABBITS Micro Value £6.99

18 (10) HERO QUEST Gremlin ****

19 (4) KICK OFF – WINNING TACTICS
Anco £12.99

20 (25) SWITCHBLADE 2
Gremlin £25.99 *****

21 (30) INTERNATIONAL KARATE +
Hit Squad £7.99 *****

22 (NE) WATERLOO
Mirror Image £9.99 **

23 (NE) RAMBO 3 Hit Squad £7.99 *

24 (24) GODS Renegade £25.53 *****

25 (15) TOKI Ocean £24.99 *****

26 (22) RAILROAD TYCOON £34.99 ****

27 (14) TREASURE ISLAND DIZZY
Code Masters £4.99 ****

28 (19) ARMOUR-GEDDON
Psygnosis £25.99 ****

29 (35) LIFE AND DEATH
Mindscape £25.53 ***

30 (21) CARRIER COMMAND
Mirror Image £9.99 *****

31 (46) CALIFORNIA GAMES
Kixx £7.99 **

32 (NE) STREET FIGHTER
Kixx £9.99

33 (34) ROCKET RANGER
Mirror Image £9.99 ****

34 (37) WORLD CLASS LEADERBOARD
Kixx £9.99 *****

35 (50) THE THREE STOOGES
Mirror Image £9.99 **

36 (23) SPEEDBALL 2 Mirrorsoft *****

37 (40) CHUCK ROCK
Core Design £25.53 *****

38 (27) CRICKET SIMULATOR
Soundware £24.99 *

39 (41) MEGA TRAVELLER 1
Empire £25.99 *****

40 (NE) MERCS
US Gold £25.99 ***

41 (33) KICK OFF + EXTRA TIME
Anco £7.99 *****

42 (32) CJ'S ELEPHANT ANTICS
Code Masters £6.99 **

43 (62) R-TYPE Hit Squad £7.99 ***

44 (70) VIOLATOR Code Masters £7.99 ***

45 (65) SUPERCARS 2
Gremlin £19.99 ***

46 (54) F-19 STEALTH FIGHTER
MicroProse £29.99 ****

47 (NE) LINE OF FIRE
US Gold £24.99 **

48 (36) KICK OFF 2
Anco £24.99 *****

49 (88) 3D CONSTRUCTION KIT
Domark £49.99 ****

50 (NE) PASSING SHOT
Mirror Image £9.99 ****

51(57) SUPER HANG-ON
Hit Squad £7.99 ****

52 (NE) SIM CITY / POPULOUS
Infogrames £29.99 *****

53 (42) SPEED BALL
Mirror Image £9.99 *****

54 (47) SUPER MONACO GRAND PRIX
US Gold £25.53 ***

55 (78) BRAT
Image Works £25.99 ***

56 (59) SPIRIT OF EXCALIBUR
Virgin £29.99 **

57 (43) PANZA KICK BOXING
US Gold £24.99 *

58 (NE) NEUROMANCER
Electronic Arts £25.99 **

59 (NE) FLOOD
Electronic Arts £10.99 ****

60 (28) FINAL WHISTLE Anco £12.99 ****

61(61) OPERATION WOLF
The Hit Squad £7.99 ****

62 (NE) PRO BOXING Code Masters £7.99

63 (26) CENTURION
Electronic Arts £25.99 ***

64 (86) LAST NINJA 2
Hit Squad £7.99 **

65 (RE) 'NAM
Domark £29.99 ***

66 (NE) WAR ZONE Core Design £20.99 ***

67 (NE) JUNGLE BOOK Electronic Zoo £7.99 *

68 (RE) HARD DRIVIN' 2 Domark £24.99 ***

69 (56) SUPER SCRAMBLE SIMULATOR
Kixx £9.99 **

70 (96) OUT RUN Klassix £7.99 *

71 (47) FAST FOOD Code Masters £6.99 ***

72 (RE) DOUBLE DRAGON
Mastertronic £7.99 *

73 (RE) PLATOON Hit Squad £7.99 ***

74 (RE) HOLLYWOOD COLLECTION
Ocean £24.99 ***

75 (80) POWER UP Ocean £29.99 ****

76 (74) TEENAGE MUTANT HERO TURTLES
Mirrorsoft £24.99 *

77 (38) EURO SUPERLEAGUE CDS £24.99 **

78 (79) AFTERBURNER The Hit Squad £7.99 *

79 (56) ASTERIX Electronic Zoo £7.99

80 (63) POWERMONGER
Electronic Arts £29.99 *****

81 (94) INTERCEPTOR Electronic Arts £10.99 ***

82 (53) CYBERCON III US Gold £29.99 *****

83 (64) DALEY THOMPSON'S OLYMPICS
Hit Squad £7.99 **

84 (NE) MOONWALKER Kixx £7.99 *

85 (NE) BATTLE CHESS II
Electronic Arts £24.95 **

86 (RE) ZAK McKRAKEN US Gold £24.95 ****

87 (48) PREDATOR Hit Squad £7.99 **

88 (60) CLASSIC 4 Energize £6.99 **

89 (44) FORGOTTEN WORLDS
Kixx £7.99 ***

90 (51) VIZ Virgin £24.99 *

91 (39) SWIV Storm £24.99 *****

92 (NE) ROBOCOP 2 Ocean £24.95 ***

93 (84) WIZBALL Hit Squad £7.99 ****

94 (NE) KAMIKAZE Code Masters £7.99 **

95 (79) TRACK SUIT MANAGER
Alternative £7.99 **

96 (85) TOP CAT Hi-Tec £6.99 **

97 (90) ESWAT US Gold £24.99 *

98 (NE) JAMES POND
Millennium £24.99 **

99 (96) BIONIC COMMANDO
Klassix £9.99 *

100 (100) POWER PACK
Beau Jolly £24.99

Manchester United Europe

and into the international arena. It's a mix of arcade and management – all linked by a point and click windows style environment.

Krisalis are also working on a John Barnes game which will be launched next Easter to coincide with the European Championships. We're told that a few non-sports games are in the offing, but details are 'top secret'.

WHERE'S THE NEW BLOOD?

It's a pretty dismal performance in software land this month, it has to be said. An appallingly low number of new full price releases have managed to get a look in, mainly because there are so few of the blighters.

All the big name games from the past few months have held positions well, with little or no competition from newer Grade A full price games. Ageing they may be, but they've managed to stave off the budget stranglehold which tends to tighten over the summer months. Roll on the autumn boom, when a lot of these publisher fellows start releasing some *really* tasty kit.

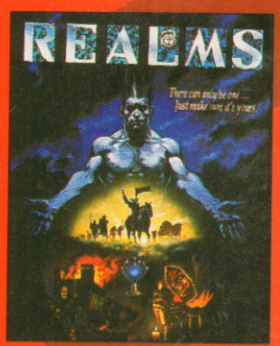
THE AMIGA POWER CHARTS: HOW THEY'RE WORKED OUT

- The Amiga Power charts are put together for us by Gallup (the folk who do the BBC pop charts among many others) based on a continuing survey of sales in a wide cross section of shops up and down the country – both independent computer stores and large chains like WH Smith. As such they're the most comprehensive charts it's possible to bring you. Doing things so comprehensively takes time, though – the chart above relates to sales during the May/June period.
- There's no dividing the charts into 'Budget' and 'Full Price' sections for us – we're sure you're perfectly capable of doing that for yourselves if you want to – so the list you see here includes games at every price point. This way, you can see just how important budget sales are to the overall market – at this time of year, with few big name titles being released, very important indeed.
- Each game is rated out of five stars (five red stars for the really, really excellent ones) using the same system as in The Bottom Line, to give you some idea of how good the things that are selling really are. Games which don't get any stars aren't necessarily total rubbish – they just happen to be the ones we've never really played, so can't properly comment on. Having said that though, there has to be a reason why nobody in the office has ever found it within themselves to sit down with them, hasn't there..?

100% PURE ENTERTAINMENT

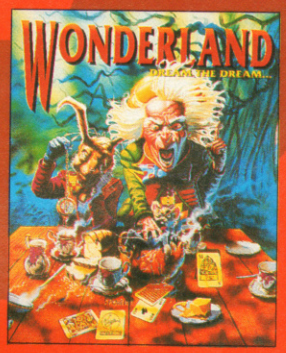
REALMS

"Let's make no bones about it. Graftgold's REALMS looks like being the game to topple PowerMonger as the greatest strategy game on home computers... it's going to be a stunner!" C&VG. Released in Autumn on **IBM PC, Amiga and Atari ST.**



MAGNETIC SCROLLS COLLECTION VOLUME 1

Corruption, Guild of Thieves and Fish - three classic adventures enhanced to run under Wonderland's new Magnetic Windows system. Available on **IBM PC, Amiga, Atari ST and Archimedes.**



WONDERLAND

Puzzles, conundrums, potions, a caterpillar, mushrooms and a very mad hatter for your **IBM PC, Amiga, Atari ST and Archimedes.**

VIZ - The Game

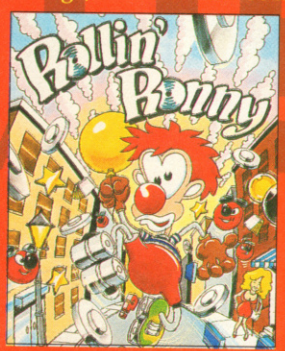
Play the part of Biffa, Buster or Johnny in this romp through Fulchester. Not for sale to minors. Available on **Amiga, Atari ST, C64, Spectrum and Amstrad. Coming soon on the IBM PC.**

GOLDEN AXE

The smash hit coin op hacks and slashes its way onto the small screen. "Best 16 bit coin op conversion" - 1991 Golden Joystick Awards. Available on **IBM PC, Amiga, Atari ST, C64, Spectrum and Amstrad.**

ROLLING RONNY

Ronny's the coolest dude in town. Help him skate through nine levels of bizarre creatures, superb animation and weird power-ups. Released in Autumn on **IBM PC, Amiga, Atari ST and C64.**



FISTS OF FURY

Battle your way through four of the biggest selling games of all time - Double Dragon II, Shinobi, Ninja Warriors and Dynamite Dux. Available on **Amiga, Atari ST, C64, Spectrum and Amstrad.**

SHUTTLE

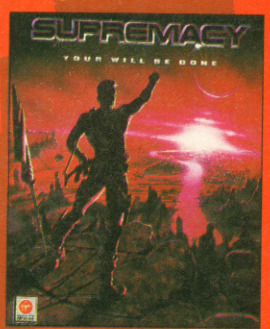
The most authentic space simulation ever. Released in the autumn on **IBM PC, Amiga and Atari ST.**

EXCALIBUR

A rich blend of fighting, fantasy and strategy set in Arthurian Britain. Available on **IBM PC, Amiga and Atari ST.**

SUPREMACY

"...the ultimate in strategy games. A classic" CU Amiga. Available on **IBM PC, Amiga, Atari ST and C64**



COMING SOON... 3D SNOOKER AND FLOOR 13.

ADVENTURES, ARCADE, ARCADE ADVENTURES, BEAT 'EM UPS, COIN-OP CONVERSIONS, COMPILATIONS, FRP, PLATFORM, RPG, SHOOT 'EM UPS, SIMULATION, STRATEGY. WHATEVER YOUR TASTE, THERE IS A VIRGIN GAME FOR YOU..

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Nebulus 2

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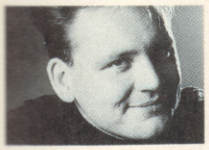
JUST WHO DO WE THINK WE ARE?

MATT BIELBY

Recently Matt's taken up horse riding, and surprisingly enough, he doesn't mind admitting to it. In fact, these last few weeks he's been a bit adventurous all round, having been jet-skiing too – he only fell off about thirteen times! In his spare time he likes to take in nature and read books by the Brontë sisters...

Matt's been playing: *The Simpsons* and *RBI Two Baseball*



GARY PENN

Gary's a bit of an "industry figure' and all-round games guru who's been doing the rounds since the days of *Monty Mole*. When programmers want opinions on a new product, he's the one they turn to. He's spent the last few weeks grappling with *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker* and going to the cinema. (Bit boring, eh?)

Gary's been playing: *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker* and *Elf*

COLIN CAMPBELL

Colin's been watching more martial arts movies and playing more crap games. The worst this month was *Living Jigsaws*. 'I couldn't find the super laser gun option anywhere, and where were the nuclear weapons?' he asked. (We're wondering if he realised what sort of game it is). Other than that he's been watching TV.

Colin's been playing: *Armalyte* and *Manchester United Europe*

MARK RAMSHAW

One of Mark's jobs is to read AMIGA POWER over and over, making sure that there are no mistakes – he loves doing that, he does. He's an all-round computer games trivia nut, having been brought up in a computer shop in Sunderland, but other than that he's an alright bloke really.

Mark's been playing: *Mega lo Mania*, and the new *Fishbone* album

STUART CAMPBELL

Stuart's been writing a typically acidic games column for weekly magazine New Computer Express and in the process seems to have won about as many friends as an embalmer in a hospice. (What's new, eh?) Stuart's hobbies include being odd and obnoxious and, er, that's it, really...

Stuart's been playing: *R-Type II* and *Street Fighter* (only joking)

JONATHAN DAVIES

Jonathan's been hiding from us in case we gave him more difficult games to review, but we tracked him down and treated him to *Thunderhawk* anyway. When he's not playing games Jonathan likes to play games. 'I didn't know there was anything else to do.' (It's all a bit sad really, isn't it?)

Jonathan's been playing: *Thunderhawks* and *R-Type II*

MATTHEW WILLIAMS

Matthew is the art person and, when he's not pretending to be passing through his blue period, he's passing out in the local ale-house. A confirmed lager fiend, Matthew describes himself as 'stupid and violent'. He likes Arnold Schwarzenneger.

Matthew's been playing: *Armalyte* and *Mercs* 'because I'm stupid and violent'.

ANDY IDE

Andy Ide – Your Sinclair editor and ladies man – has been too busy to play any games this month because he's been out on the town acting the tart. Still, we managed to persuade him to review *Metal Mutants*, which he 'really rather likes'.

Andy's been playing: 'Erm, oh, I'll get back to you with that.'

SEAN MASTERSON

Oh dear! Sean's got his hands on *3D Construction Kit* and he's being (ahem) 'creating my own virtual environment, passing through the limits of my own being and taking in the other side'. Other than that he's been playing his guitar and chanting a mantra.

Sean's been playing: *Mega lo Mania* and *Hunter*

GAMES

Welcome to the AMIGA GAMES review section, which is where all the real action takes place. As usual, we've a bulging bag of in-depth reviews of the best or most interesting new games coming up over the next few pages, followed later in the mag by another section where a) some pretty dreadful affairs get what's coming to them, and b) some little gems receive well deserved commendations.

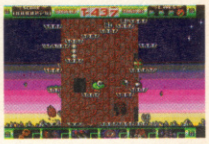
Because the publishers are STILL holding games back for the late autumn commercial rush, we've been scrambling around frantically for really decent stuff the last few weeks, but we've come back with some pretty good games. Take *The Simpsons* (which, admit it, we all thought was going to be crap) but has actually turned out to be quite sweet. Simpsons fan and editor person Matt Bielby gives it a right old going over on page 26 and comes away feeling quite pleasant about the world.

There's also *Mega lo Mania* which, being one of the games of the year, earns a giant four page review by Mark Ramshaw. *Elf* is a weird one from Ocean which we reckon could be a surprise monster hit, and then there's *Nebulus 2*, the sequel to (hem hem) *Nebulus*. Add to that Core's wonderful chopper sim *Thunderhawk*, US Golds's long awaited *Gauntlet III*, and the extremely strange *Blade Warrior*, and you've quite a respectable selection for the so-called 'dead period'.

Anyway, enough of this: it all starts over the page...

***Elf*: Strange, it's different, but is it any good?**

***Mega lo Mania*: Is it really *Populous* with laughs?**



***Nebulus 2*: Dead sequel, or a winning formula?**

IN A NUTSHELL: THE AMIGA POWER SCORING SYSTEM (AND HOW IT WORKS)

Our reviewing 'philosophy' (for want of a better word) is fairly simple and self explanatory. Here's a brief breakdown on how it works:

1) We never forget you're being asked to fork out £25 or more for a full price game – it's a lot of money, and we believe a product has to be really good to be worth it. Half baked ideas, cynical tie-ins and plain sloppiness just don't cut it, which is why you'll find our reviews quite possibly the toughest around. Compare the marks we give out to those of just about any other magazine – we think you'll find our wider spread of opinion tells you a lot more about the games.

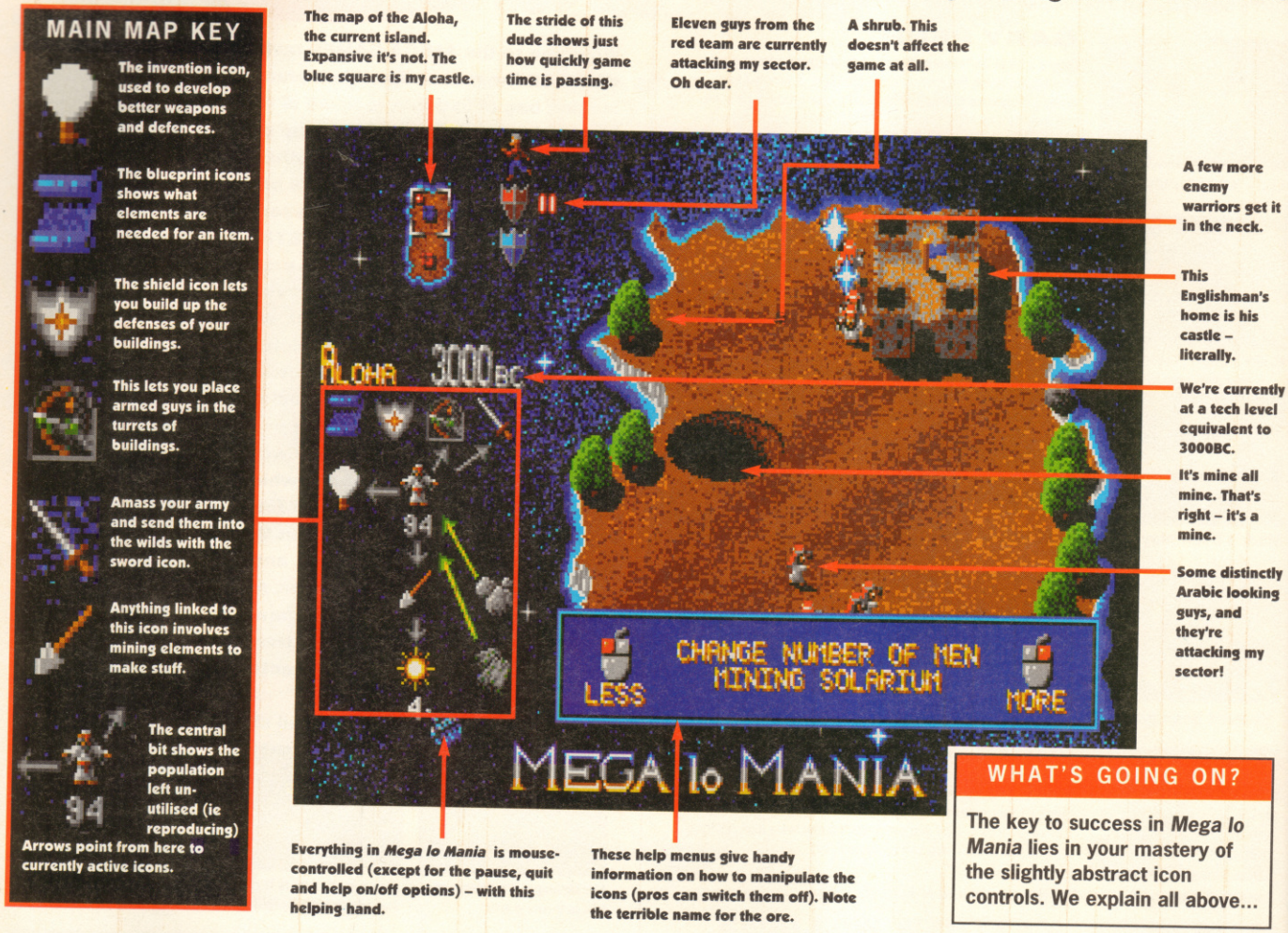
2) We believe a rating system should be simple, logical and understandable – to the extent that a sentence like this is one, which is setting out to try and explain it, should prove totally redundant. So we'll stop right here.

3) We'll nearly always broadly agree about whether a game is good or bad, but sometimes – just sometimes – opinions differ quite strongly. That's when we run an 'On the other hand...' box, allowing a second reviewer to voice his or her (not that we have any girlie reviewers as yet) opinions as appropriate.

4) Predictable we know, but there simply isn't a point number four.

MEGA LO

From Image Works comes the ultimate power fiend's fantasy – a light hearted and



WHAT'S GOING ON?

The key to success in *Mega lo Mania* lies in your mastery of the slightly abstract icon controls. We explain all above...

Game: Mega lo Mania
Publisher: Image Works
Price: £30.99
Author: Sensible Software
Release: October

Oh no. How the hell do I even begin to explain this one? It's not that *Mega lo Mania* is incredibly complex to play. Quite the opposite. For a game which relies so heavily on icons, it's remarkably easy to pick up. It's just that actually trying to explain the thing to somebody who doesn't have the game in front of them creates a few problems. Yes, the look is vaguely *Populous*-y, so you know roughly what ball park we're in, but it would perhaps be more accurate to describe it as a vastly enhanced *Kingdom* game. For those who don't know *Kingdom*, it was an ancient numbers-based management thing that appeared on mainframes, Commodore Pets, BBCs and the like – you simply had to juggle with your population, sending some off to tend the crops, some to defend the town, some to reproduce and so on, hopefully building a healthy community as you did so. Limited graphics appeared on some versions, but they were very basic – not at all like *Mega lo Mania*'s cute pseudo-3D landscapes! – meaning it looked very different to this new Image Works game, though at heart the two are really very similar. Don't let this idea of *Mega lo Mania* as a management game put you off though – I've never had so much fun mucking around with icons and juggling numbers in my life.

'Once you've played *Mega lo Mania* for 15 minutes you'll be hooked'

MORE POWER TO THE PEOPLE

So what do you actually have to do? Well, playing against up to three computer opponents, the aim is to simply conquer an island. Having selected one to try for and the number of little computer people to place there, the first step is for both human and computer characters to stake out a sector of the island. The location chosen (if the island is actually large enough to offer a choice) will actually have some bearing on later events, so a bit of experimentation is recommended. A wooden fortress is then placed in your sector, and the game commences.

The first step is to set a large number of people aside to invent something. Inventions can fall into three categories. Shield strengthening (to re-build defences when your fortress and other constructions are under attack), defensive weapons (from sticks to bows and arrows to boiling pots of oil and so on), and offensive weapons for use when sending your men out on a raid (swords, spears, catapults, cannons etc).

Each invention will take a certain amount of time to develop. This will depend on the number of people set to the task, and the complexity of the invention. Putting almost all of the population into inventing is a good idea in the beginning. Any people left without work will stay indoors, doing what little computer people do (ie creating more little computer people). Building strength through numbers is an essential strategy, particularly if inventions and raw materials are in short supply. It's sometimes

MANIA

supremely addictive strategy game which laughs when things go wrong, and manages to make *Populous* look very po-faced indeed.

Hey, these guys look a bit dangerously successful. Better get some troops in there. It's time for a scrap...

possible to storm a massive fortress with a very primitive army, and still be victorious.

Once something has been invented, you'll be able to view a blueprint of it, see what raw materials are needed (these all have corny pseudo-mineral names like planetarium, araldite, moron, and some which are just too awful to mention), then set people to the task of mining the correct quantities in order to get the inventions built. The better the balance in ore production, the quicker things are built. It's all very clever, but very easy to get the hang of.

As time progresses, chances are your guys will advance a 'tech level'. This will usually result in some niftier looking (and tougher) buildings, and the chance to invent better stuff – even to the extent that you may find yourself building factories and laboratories to do it in. Factories let you do production runs of items, while laboratories spur on the frequency and complexity of inventions. Mines can also sometimes be set up, which result in the discovery of new raw materials. This is essential because there's only a finite quantity of each raw material in a sector. Once they've all been exhausted, it may be a case of packing your bags and colonising a new sector, if there are any unoccupied ones. (Nobody ever said taking over the world was easy).

As you progress through the epochs, the years march on. When you get beyond the initial battles, spanning 9500BC to 1000AD, you'll find yourself in control of bi-planes and the like before eventually nuclear weapons rear their ugly heads. The game is at its funniest when you get to pit the weapons of 1945 against a bunch of Dark Age thugs – brutal and bloody it may be, but bloody good fun all the same.

Of course no war would be complete without alliances. The computer opponents are, as ever, quite shrewd about this, and will only join forces with you if it's to their advantage. Then, just when things are going swimmingly they'll stab you in the back (sometimes even joining up with other leaders against you!).

And that's pretty much the game in a (very small) nutshell. As a games concept it's just right – big enough to endow it with lasting appeal, but not so sprawling that it loses direction.

...Ah, that's better. The sector has been wiped clean, and my men have set up a cosy little castle. I think I'll build a factory and a mine next.

HEY, IT ISN'T EASY BEING A GOD

So you think it all sounds a bit similar to *Populous* and *Powermonger*, eh? Well, you can forget that straight away. Whereas those games let you 'influence' events (not something I could ever really connect with), *Mega lo Mania* plays things very directly. You can tell every last one of your minions just what to do. This makes things a whole lot more involving on an immediate level, though admittedly losing something of the epic feel and so ultimately some of the scope.

Don't get me wrong though – this isn't an out-and-out action game. Indeed, the visual aspect of *Mega lo Mania* can be quite deceptive. Although there is always something happening on-screen, you never have any action-by-action control over it, as you would in an arcade game. Your little army of men scurry around of their own accord, →

The intro sequence, with distinctive graphics from Jo Walker, the man behind Demoniak's visuals.

SENSIBLE SOFTWARE – TAKING OVER THE WORLD

I gave Chris Yates at Sensible Software a quick call and fired a couple of *Mega lo Mania*esque questions in his general direction.

AP: Okay awkward question first, how aware of* Populous *were you when developing* Mega lo Mania*?

CY: To be honest, we didn't really take any notice of it. It's quite inevitable at the moment that any game which involves controlling little computer people is going to be accused of ripping off *Populous*. The thing with *Populous* is that you have a quite subtle influence on events. With our game, everything is controlled very directly. It's much more like *Lemmings* in that respect (though we didn't consciously aim for that either).

AP: Fair enough. Tell me how the samples came about. Were they an integral part of the design?

CY: No. The whole game design was actually quite different to begin with anyway. It's just sort of developed as we went along, although it was always intended to be very visual and icon-controlled. We toyed with the idea of including speech, and tried recording it ourselves. The results were very poor (as usually seems to be the case when programmers do it themselves). By using professional actors and mucking about with the sample rate we've got some impressive results.

AP: Definitely. You packed quite a lot in there too. Were things limited by the amount of memory you had available at all?

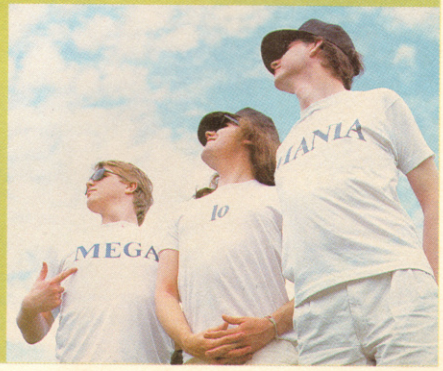
CY: We did drop a number of samples. Some were just plain irritating, but disk space was also a problem. We couldn't pack anything else onto the disk if we wanted to.

AP: Yes, the graphics seemed a little less impressive than they could have been. It was the sound and icon-interface that shone through the most. Some cute little effects like crumbling towers and better animation on the planes would have improved things visually.

CY: Well, we knew from the beginning that it would be impossible to include all the graphic effects we wanted. In the end we've gone for a very stylized approach, and included as much as we could. If we had a 4Mb machine, then obviously we would have done a lot more.

AP: What are your plans for the future? How likely is a sequel?

CY: If this one goes down well, then *Mega Lo Mania 2* will be on the cards. We may well include a link up option, allowing two players to compete with each other. In the immediate future though, we've got *Wizkid* coming soon through Ocean. We're also toying with the idea of a football game. Something to beat *Kick Off*. The trouble with *Kick Off* is that it doesn't really feel like you're in control of your players – like *Populous* in fact.



Sensible? Not us guv'. Left to right: Chris Yates, Jon Hare and Chris Chapman.

EPOCH FIVE ISLAND ONE

After many battles, and much bloodshed, I've reached the first island of Epoch Five, evocatively titled Mascara. Here we go – I'm playing the role of Madcap, that sexy guy with the funny blue helmet.

1 Okay, I've selected 25 men from my store to use on this island. If I get them (ahem) reproducing pretty sharpish, then I should have enough to beat those three other dudes and dudettes to a pulp.

2 Welcome to my humble abode. There's a mine and a factory to be built and inventions to be designed. By heck, it's all go on Mascara island.

3 And in no time at all – viola, one settlement. Inventions seem a bit thin on the ground in this sector, so I think I'll relocate. 'Go west, young man.' Okay, I will.

8 Charge! This scrappy little settlement is no match for my expert demolition team. Ha ha! The world will soon be mine!

9 See what I mean. Wiped that sector out, no problem. Should I stay or should I go? I think I'll go and attack somebody else.

10 Like these scum-suckers for instance. These mortals are no match for my astounding cunning and guile. Oh boy. I think this game is starting to affect me.

11 Hey, these guys are putting up a fight! Still, there's only 73 of them. I'll reduce them to dust (though judging by the map at the top left, there's still a few of the red team around).

shooting randomly. And when you've advanced far enough to develop planes and the like, they simply glide over the screen – a bit silly, but any extra control would probably have complicated the game too much.

All in all, aside from directing your guys to adjacent sectors, or back into the stronghold, wars are pretty much automated affairs. Having said that though battles are never dull – after all, you control the deployment of wall strengthening shields, send soldiers into the fray and place them on the battlements in real time (which is why having the clock on the slowest setting is a must) and so on, which proves to be enough for the best of us to cope with.

While at first glance the icon controls over on the left of the screen may seem a little daunting, they are actually quite easy to get the hang of. When I first played the game, I did so without even looking at the manual, and was up and running in the space of ten minutes without any trouble. Sensible Software have, quite sensibly (ahem) included a handy little explanation window which describes the function each icon performs, though (equally sensibly) it can be disabled whenever you so desire. What thoughtful chaps.

The key to the game's simplicity lies in the context-sensitive nature of these icons. At any point in time, only relevant icons can be accessed. As the game progresses, more and more icons become available (mining elements, factory building, setting up production runs and the like), but this gradual development of available commands, just the like the increasing complexity of the game, grows with the player's experience. It makes for a perfect learning curve, not unlike Activision's *Deuteros*.

IT'S SIMPLY A STATE OF MIND

The urge to complete a trio of islands and advance to the next epoch really is quite tremendous. And with the ever advancing technology, there's always something new just round the next corner.

Occasionally you get to feeling the game isn't quite perfect, that the balance between total obsession and complete frustration is just about to veer sharply away towards the latter, but no. It's never quite enough to put you off the game – you'll always come back, because you just know that next epoch is almost within your grasp.

Games with little computer people running around in them can occasionally feel too slow, but happily that's not the case either. Clock fast-forward is included, thankfully – events would be alternately too slow, then too fast, without it. I initially found myself having problems when the speed was at max, and a bunch of guys started attacking me, but after a brief chat with Sensible, they've amended the options menu to included an auto-speed option. This has the effect of slowing the game to normal speed if any enemies move into one of your sectors, giving you more time to react. This seemingly insignificant feature really elevates the user-friendliness of the program to an almost perfect level.

Longevity-wise the game has no problem either. With nine epochs (each

Would you like to be the brain behind any one of these faces? Nope, thought not.

Gazza Island, 100BC and the big Italian guy is deep in thought at my proposal to join forces.

'Sensible Software have managed to pull strategy games out of the train-spotter age'

4 Two minutes later, and things are really rolling along. This new settlements shaping up nicely. Here at the inventions lab I'm currently developing a jet fighter (cackle).

5 Pow, we've just reached another tech level. Lots of ore is being mined, and my small army is shaping up quite nicely.

6 So, old Redhead wants to join forces with me, huh? I think I'll accept, for as long as it proves convenient anyway.

7 I've now got over seven hundred minions with which to deal out death and destruction. Time to hit the road (and my enemies) methinks.

12 'You want to be in my gang?' I don't know, achieve some success and suddenly everyone wants to be your friend. Well, alright then. For the moment.

13 The last stronghold of enemy civilisation. Once I've cleared this out of the way, then there's just a small rabble to the north to deal with, and the island will be mine.

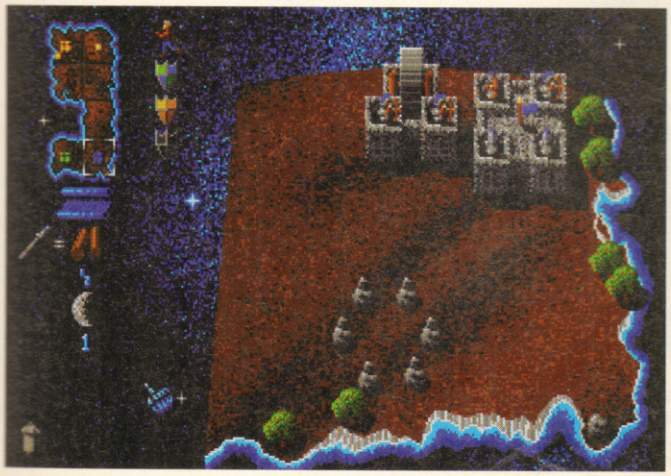
14 Dead! They're all dead! I've won. Yippee! I almost feel guilty. (Almost, but not quite).

15 Oh look, that's me. A prophet of Mascara, no less. Hmm. Excuse me but I don't think that's a very impressive title. In fact it sounds more like an insult. (Hey, did you spill my pint?)

with three islands) to battle through, *Mega lo Mania* should certainly hold its own in the long term challenge stakes. The use of a code for each epoch is definitely appreciated too (I may have been forced to smash and burn one of the office Amigas otherwise).

One thing I haven't mentioned yet (indeed one of the best aspects of the game) is the speech. This is one of those games that gets everybody who comes within ear-shot peeking at the monitor, just to see what's making all the noise. Virtually every event in the game is accompanied by a sample. From the cockney girl informing you that, 'The production run is completed', to the Italian opponent who, upon forming an alliance with you says, 'Ce, ce, why not?', it's sonic heaven. And the the guy of questionable sexual orientation who says, 'Do you want to be in my gang?' is a real scream. Apparently 'real' actors were employed to provide all the samples and it's proved to be an inspired decision.

In fact, the importance of the speech can't be stressed enough. The slickness of the presentation is what elevates this program from the merely very good to the downright brilliant. Previously speech samples on the Amiga have always come across as slightly amateurish. With *Mega lo Mania* Sensible Software have managed to pull strategy games out of the train-spotter age, and into the world of console-like mass appeal – it makes the game seems just, well, 'professional' in the same sort of way that Lucasfilm products and very few others are. Other programmers should take note. This is what we want – good ideas AND professional presentation. Games buyers have put up with shoddy products for far too long.



Oh look, some standing stones (y'know, like that Stonehenge thingy). Maybe I should stand in the middle and pray for prosperity (or something).

GRIPES, COMPLAINTS AND WHINGES

They're all a bit on the trivial side actually. The main one is that the graphics and animations never quite match the quality set by the sound. Armies move from sector to sector in a puff of smoke which is cute, but it might have been nicer to see them march on and off the screen one by one. And the way the planes simply glide from the bottom to the top of the screen, then re-appear at the bottom again, is a bit tacky.

The only other problem I have is with the slightly bitty backgrounds, which remind me of Code Masters *BMX Simulator*, strangely enough. A more thoughtful use of colour wouldn't have gone amiss. These really are minor points though, and the fact that these are my only complaints only serves to highlight the near perfection of the game. In fact, if I were to say that *Mega lo Mania* is the only game to come between me and my beloved copy of *Llamatron* this month, then you've got a pretty good idea just how much I like it.

In fact, the only problem I've got with *Mega lo Mania* is in trying to give it a final mark. You see, I don't enjoy playing at as much as, say *Monkey Island* (yes, it's that darned game again) – it's simply too frustrating at times – but it HAS taken over my life. It's the most compulsive computer game I've played since I was just a nipper. I guess what I'm trying to say is, it's really rather jolly good.

Mega lo Mania has to be congratulated for being the most accessible strategy game yet. Even if you've only ever had eyes for arcade blasts or cute games like *Lemmings*, once you've played this for 15 minutes you'll be hooked. Then your life will really start to fall apart.• ***MARK RAMSHAW***

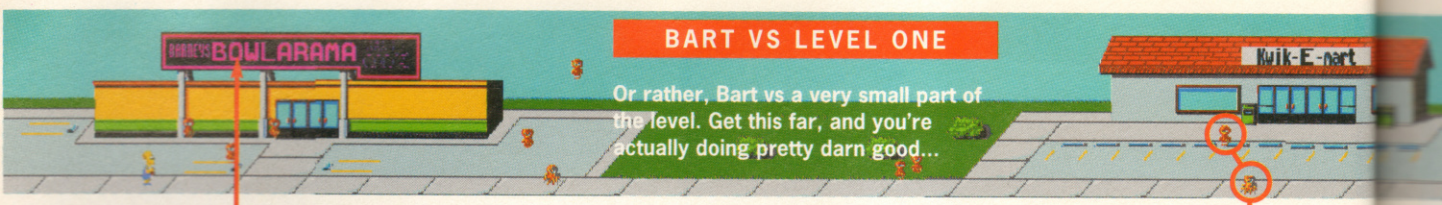
UPPERS The best use of sound yet in an Amiga game helps catapult the presentation level into the realms of console-like ultra-slickness. Addiction in drug-like proportions. That ol' urge for 'just one more go...' has never been so strong. One meg owners get the bonus of less disk access for speech.

DOWNERS The icons just very, very occasionally get in the way a bit, and the graphics could maybe have been tweaked a bit more (collapsing buildings and dead bodies would have been fun).

THE BOTTOM LINE

You've never had it so good. Another game to add to that list of all-time greats. Despite the premise of the game, this is one sure to appeal to all. (And how did they get that sample of Prince Charles crying, 'It's all over'?)

90 PERCENT



BART VS LEVEL ONE

Or rather, Bart vs a very small part of the level. Get this far, and you're actually doing pretty darn good...

The neon sign on this bulding is stuck on purple. Bart needs to shoot it with a rocket which – somehow – fixes it and flicks things back to a harmless red again.

Watch these two! They're some of the meanest nasties you'll find on the first level, leaping up together just when you think you've got their behaviour sussed.

After the catastrophe of last year's *Turtles* game, expectations for *The Simpsons*

THE SIMPS

'The bulk of the appeal is down to the strength of the Bart Simpson character'

Game: The Simpsons – Bart VS The Space Mutants
Publisher: Ocean
Price: £24.99 (One meg version free with Cartoon Classics pack)
Author: Arc Developments
Release: Mid Sept (One meg version available now)

So here it is, Ocean's big licence for 1991. And – I might as well go ahead and say it – it's actually rather good. Certainly it looks as if all our worrying – based to a large degree on the past performance of last year's big name cartoon-licensed title – was for nothing. This is a fast, well presented, clear and cute little scroller – the office has echoed over the past week to the sound of people wandering over, watching for a few minutes, and then saying (with more than a hint of surprise in their voices), 'Y'know, it's actually rather good.'

So, the ghost of the *Turtles* well and truly exorcised, let's take a closer look at the game that could well turn out to be this year's biggest hit. Only the foolish would deny that the bulk of the appeal is down to the strength of the Bart Simpson character – slightly over-exposed he may be, especially for someone who only a smallish proportion of the population have ever seen in his original TV-incarnation, but his bubble hasn't burst just yet. Image Works may find they struggle a bit with their second *Turtles* game, however much of an improvement over the first one it may be – Bart is undoubtedly now the man of the moment.

He's a man who works particularly well in computer form too – he's just so easy to draw, for a start. Bright yellow, and with a pointy head, he provides a crisp and clear central image to what is generally a very clean looking game. Abandoning subtle shading, parallax scrolling and the like in favour of flat, bright colours, *The Simpsons* looks as much like a console product as anything I've seen on the Amiga. Bart himself, while not the biggest sprite I've ever seen (the game doesn't scroll vertically, and since there's a fair amount of platform jumping to be done, he has to be of a reasonably compact size for the screen to fit it all in) is constantly amusing, whether running around with a spray can, skateboarding, or knocking hats off the heads of innocent passers-by. He moves well too, running increasingly faster as you push the joystick in one constant direction, then sliding to a halt as you slow him down.

WHAT DO WE GET FOR OUR MONEY?

Well, first up there's an animated opener. Aliens explain that their fiendish plan is to disguise themselves as humans and fuel their machine-that'll-conquer-the-world (quite how it'll do that isn't clear) with raw materials collectable from all over Bart's hometown of Springfield. On the first level, for instance, they're collecting all the purple things they can find 'cos their machine runs from purple things (Look, I never said this had to make sense, okay?) while on the second level they've modified their creation and it's, erm, hats they're after. Your job then, as Bart, is to make your way through Springfield, avoiding alien nasties and disguising, destroying or collecting as many of the things the aliens are after as possible. Level one, for instance, sees you walking, then skating, through Springfield on a mad rush to paint as many purple things a different colour as you can.

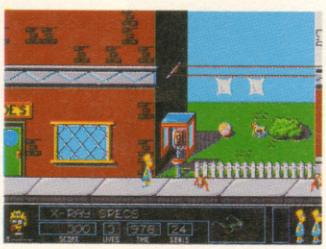
Faults? Well, there are some. The fact that you're spending a lot of your time collecting things, buying weapons or tools from various shops, and figuring out interesting ways to disguise or destroy the various objects you're after (you can't just spray all purple things for instance – you have to work out other ways to get rid of some of them) makes for what is actually a rather in-depth and challenging game – one that rather belies its simple, cartoony look. I suspect many younger Bart-fans are going to get hopelessly stuck.

Cycling through the objects in your inventory, putting on your sunglasses (which reveal who are real people and who aliens-in-disguise, in the style of the film *They Live*) and so on – all selectable via the joystick – I found slightly harder to access than ideal too. Still, perhaps that's just me.

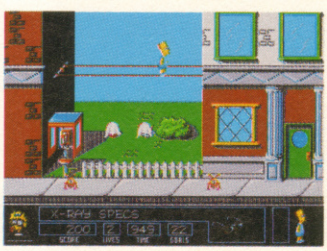
Simpsons fans may be disappointed the rest of the family make such fleeting appearances in the game too – one of them gets to help Bart towards the end of each level if need be, then they all congregate for the big nuclear power station finalé – but this is Bart's show. Having only seen a handful of the cartoons it didn't bother me at all.

Most annoying for me though – though admittedly an integral part of the game – is discovering quite what constitutes a platform and what doesn't. At least you don't die when you fall off things, but it can be frustrating jumping onto what clearly looks like the sort of ledge you should be able to stand on and discovering you can't, while things you clearly shouldn't be able to walk along (washing lines, say, or bushes) are fair game. It really is a case of suck it and see – just don't take anything for granted.

MUTANT BEATING CASE ONE

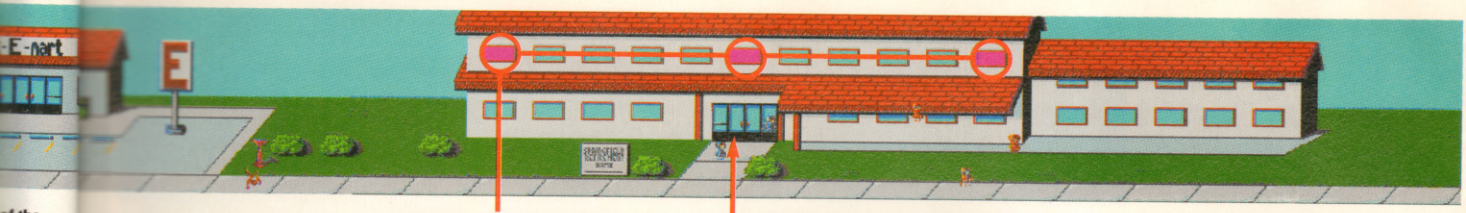


Okay, so you've got your spray can, but how are you going to re-spray those purple toys in the garden there? You can't walk backwards into the screen, and standing on the pavement and jumping up at them is a no-no because those indestructible mutants will get you.



The solution? Just jump onto the seat, the phone booth, then up to the washing line. Walk along it and – voila! – you'll knock those sheets onto the toys, disguising them. These Space Mutants may be able to cross space, but they're unable to recognise a toy when it's got a sheet on it.

CASE TWO



Shoot the pruple blinds in these three windows to make them snap up out of sight, and so safe from the (rather easily-conned) aliens.

Use a key by the door of this building to whisk you, space-warp style, back to the start of the level – you'll need to get back to spray the purple people who start coming out of the cinema there about the same time as you're getting near the far end of the level. (Alternatively, you can always walk back, but it takes time).

weren't exactly high. So the finished product comes as something of a shock...

SONS

TWO VERSIONS OF THE SAME SONG

The Simpsons comes in two versions – the one, packaged in a small cardboard box, that comes with the new Cartoon Classics Amiga bundle, and the normal street version. The copy reviewed here is the one from the bundle and the first to be completed, though, annoyingly, it'll only work on the new generation of Amigas. Presumably this is deliberate – a tactic designed to ward off large scale piracy of the bundled game before the stand alone version of *The Simpsons* is available in the shops – but it's annoying.

Expect the street version of the game to be in the stores around the middle of September – if there are any real differences from this one (and we strongly suspect that there won't be) they'll be reported in a future True Stories. As it stands, it looks like the major difference will be that the stand alone one will come on just the one disk, lacking the impressive animated intro sequence – though why this should be the case is unclear – it seems slightly unfair on established Amiga owners, though of course it really has no bearing at all on how much you'll enjoy the game.

One thing is certain – *The Simpsons* has come at just the right time for Ocean. After tying their colours to the masts of a number of decidedly non-hit films (*Navy Seals, Darkman, Nightbreed*) over the last twelve months, it's good to see them back on form – not just with a good, strong licence, but a good product spun off from it too. Ocean's philosophy has always been along the lines that 'we don't sell software, we sell dreams', and here's where it looks to make some sort of sense. A hit in every sense of the word. • ***MATT BIELBY***

'I suspect many younger Bart-fans are going to get hopelessly stuck'

TALKING TO THE BARTMEN

The Amiga version of *The Simpsons* has been put together by Arc Development, fresh from their success with Activision's rather wonderful *R-Type II* conversion. Ocean's version of *The Simpsons* isn't based on the coin-op currently doing the rounds, but Akklaim's Nintendo NES version. I asked Paul Walker of Arc why:

'I've no idea really – I think the Akklaim licence simply came up first. I haven't actually played the arcade machine myself – though a number of other people around here have – so I couldn't really comment on the differences at all.'

What was your basic approach to the product? You don't seem to have changed anything very much at all from the Akklaim version.

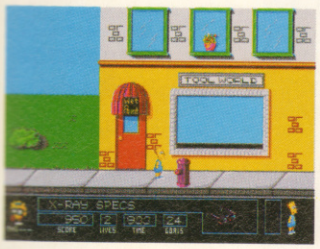
'No, we haven't – we thought the NES version worked so well we tried to reproduce it as closely as possible. People have asked us why we didn't make the little Bart character bigger, but we felt it would have harmed the gameplay. Thus everything's proportionally the same as it is on the Nintendo screen – one great advantage of keeping it like that is it means we don't need to muck about with complications like making the screen scroll up and down to fit all the platforms on, say, and the game works all the better for that.'

That animated intro sequence wasn't on the Nintendo though, surely?

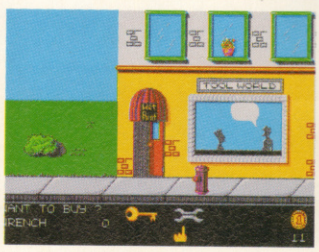
'No, it wasn't – that's all our own work. We're big fans of the cartoons and tried to make it as true to The Simpsons as possible. It took some time making sure Bart looks like Bart – he might look easy to draw, but getting him looking just right no matter what he's doing can be a real struggle.'

The only real complaint I'd have is that the game's a bit hard, especially for the really young Simpsons fans.

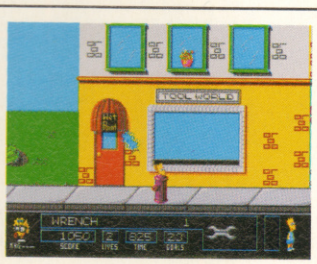
'You're right, it is pretty tough. Level two, where the aliens don't just move up and down, but bounce around the screen, is harder than level one, and by the time you get to level four it's a real bast. We made some of the platforms slightly bigger, in fact, to give you a bit more help. If you stick with it it's good though – there's a lot to the game, and I do think it provides real value for money.'



Bart can't jump onto any platforms of sufficient height to spray that awning over the shop doorway. It's a bit of a problem, but that wet paint sign is the clue.



Just nip into the shop itself, buy a spanner with the money you've hopefully collected along the way, and then take it outside again.



Now use the spanner on the water hydrant. Hurrah! Water sprays all over the place, washing the purple paint off and revealing it to be harmless red underneath.

UPPERS Bright graphics, generally smooth control, some neat puzzles, a fair amount of variety, bizarre humour and this year's strongest licence make *The Simpsons* an unqualified success.

DOWNERS Perhaps a bit too complicated for the youngest gameplayers, and the average *Simpsons* fan is nothing if not young.

THE BOTTOM LINE

A hit, pure and simple. A few false starts, some slippage and the odd weak licence has meant a disappointing Amiga showing from Ocean this year – here's where it all comes right.

83 PERCENT

Game: AH-37M Thunderhawk
Publisher: Core Design
Price: £30.99
Author: Macintosh Avery
Release: 22nd August

Dawn breaks over the Bolivian rainforests, and a truck makes its way along the dusty track that passes for a road in these parts. The driver whistles a cheerful tune, but stops as his co-driver taps him on the shoulder. He thought he heard something, but shrugs and returns to his newspaper. Suddenly, with a deafening roar and a blast of wind, a helicopter gunship appears from below the horizon directly in front of the truck. The driver swerves as a volley of 30mm shells pounds into the ground around him. The windscreen shatters, the tyres are shredded, the radiator bursts.

Here's Jack Marshall, your chief tactician, who you'll be seeing rather a lot of. He'll let you know just what you're supposed to be doing, and tell you off if you don't do it.

Then, inexplicably, just as all seems lost, the helicopter wobbles about a bit and crashes into the ground.

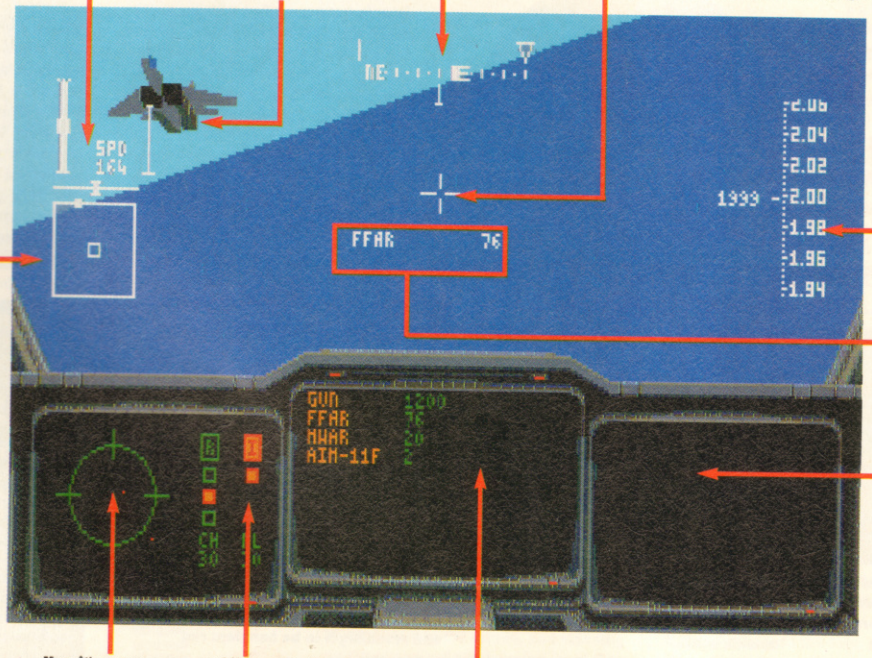
If you thought planes were a tricky proposition, you ought to try flying a helicopter. Blimey it's hard. Far too hard for you and me to manage certainly – and that's before you throw us into a combat-type situation. Happily, that's just the problem Core Design have tried to address in *Thunderhawk*, which is being billed as 'more of an arcade game than a boring flight sim'. This means no long flights with nothing happening for ages, no constantly worrying about running out of weapons and fuel and, most importantly, no horrible keys to wrestle with when you ought to be concentrating on flying.

The briefing room. Here maps, cine film and photos are used to describe your mission – it's all quite effective actually (even if it does go on a bit).

It is especially useful though when it gets round to telling you what sort of hardware you'll be up against – Hind-A's aren't too bad, but if you see a Hokum, run!

'The emphasis has been placed on fast, slick graphics and plenty of action'

AH-37M THUNDER



Your common or garden speed is indicated here...

...while rate of climb (or vertical speed) is over here.

Here's your compass – the triangle indicates the direction of your mission.

Here's your gunsight – it can, of course, move anywhere around the screen, though the limited angle your copter can tip limits things a bit.

Oh dear, it's around here that everything starts to look a bit complicated – or, at least, it does if you're not actually familiar with the game. In fact, 'cyclics', 'collectives', and the like – all explained in the 'Helicopters' box on the next page – aren't all that tricky to get your mind around at all.

Numbers, numbers, numbers – it can only be... your altitude!

This bit indicates your current weapon and the number remaining.

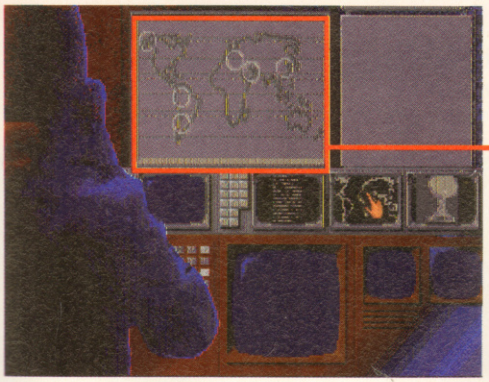
This big, empty space is actually your target computer.

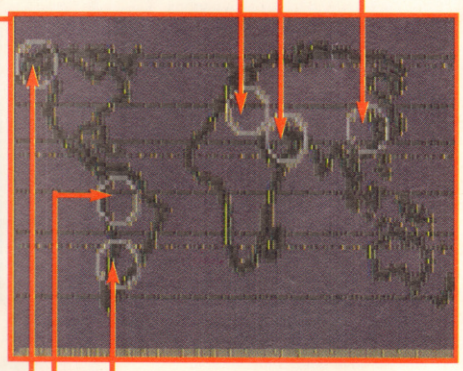
Yes, it's your radar screen...

...while next to it are chaff/flares and so on.

Wow! All your weapons are indicated in the middle here.

After a couple of disappointing time-fillers, Core finally get round to releasing a rea





WHAT IT IS YOU'VE GOT TO DO

It's not all fun and larks being a helicopter pilot. *Thunderhawk* comes with 60 missions, set in various theatres of operation – Europe, The Middle East etc – all set out in a sort of chronological order, so completing mission *a* naturally leads into mission *b*. There're countries to liberate, drug dealers to wipe out and so on.

HAWK

THE HELICOPTER SIM THAT ISN'T

Instead, *Thunderhawk* has been pared down to the very minimum necessary to get a flight sim off the ground (as it were), with the emphasis placed on fast, slick graphics and plenty of action. And, boy, are those graphics fast and slick. In fact, they're probably the fastest, slickest 3D graphics ever to hit the Amiga (although I wouldn't stake my reputation on it). There's no cheating either, so you won't see landmasses suddenly appearing out of nowhere (sorry, *F29 Retaliator*), or mountains that look more like chunks of Toblerone (eh, *F-15 Strike Eagle II*?).

You won't catch *Thunderhawk* skimping on 'views', either. As well as the standard cockpit view, you can also do an external view from all possible angles (including underneath, which is a bit scary), a view from the current target looking up at your helicopter, and – best of all – a view from your weapons as they speed to their target. This last one really is a corker – much better than *F-15 II*'s half-hearted effort. Travelling in a helicopter is one thing; travelling on the front of a guided air-to-ground missile as it leaves its launch pod, streaks down to ground level and hugs the terrain while homing in on its target is something else altogether. Following a machine gun shell to its target is better still.

Talking of targets, that's one thing *Thunderhawk* provides plenty of. As soon →

REVEALED! EVERYMAN'S GUIDE TO HOW HELICOPTERS WORK!

Helicopters are tricky little devils to control, and your first few attempts are likely to end in a confused tangle of metal. (That's if you're anything like as incompetent as me, anyway – and I'm assuming you are). The secret is to know exactly what going on up there on the roof.

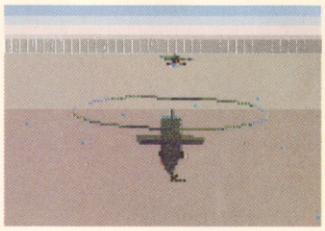
The first thing to be aware of is the 'collective' – the angle each individual rotor blade makes with the air. When this is zero the rotor blades are flat and the copter will sit on its landing pad (no matter how fast they're going round). Increase it and the rotors start to generate lift. The result? You take off.

As your chopper rises into the air, you'll probably be wondering how to move it around. For this you'll need to use the 'cyclic', which tilts the whole rotor, generating a horizontal force on top of the vertical one. Your helicopter now moves in whatever direction you tilt the rotors.

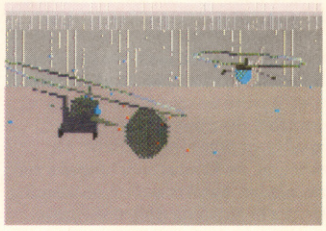
Just to complicate things, when the helicopter's at a standstill – or moving forwards slowly – you can rotate it on its axis by varying the speed of the tail rotor, pointing th nose towards the ground, up in the air, or wherever.

GETTING BEATEN UP NO1

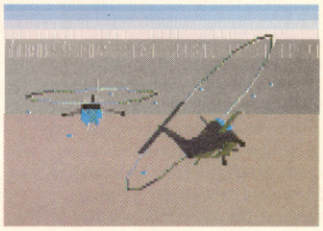
A one-on-one confrontation with an enemy 'copter. This is what flying's all about. Man and machine in perfect harmony (or something like that).



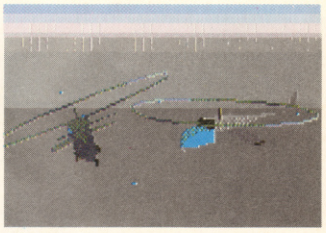
Ooh, look – another helicopter. Do you think he'll want to be my friend?



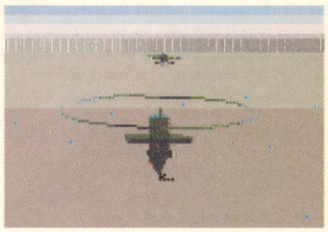
Oh dear, apparently not. (That big blob thing is him firing at me, by the way).



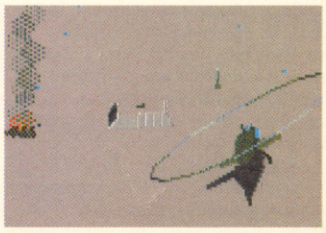
Better show him who's boss, eh? This'll take some clever manoeuvring...



A-ha! Thanks to our cunning green(!) camouflage, he doesn't suspect a thing.

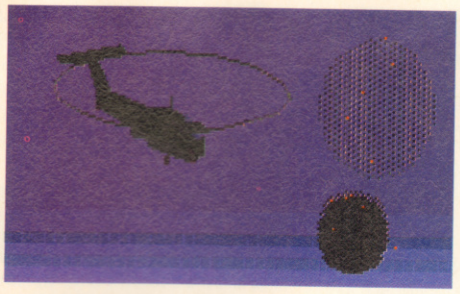


And look at that – he turns tail and runs. This helicopter laugh is easy!



Now I think I'll go and burn his house to the ground, heh heh...

...and it's perhaps the most user-friendly flight 'sim' ever!

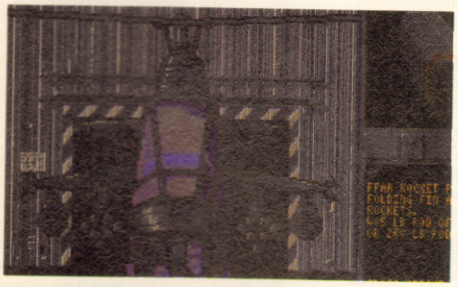


Dusk or dawn, who can tell? All I know is it's dark and there's shooting going on!

as you arrive on the battlefield the screen fills up with missile locks, so all you've got to do is pick a weapon (there's one for all occasions, from bombs to air-to-air missiles) and fire away. Once hit, the enemy erupts into a shower of sparks and catches fire, with a column of smoke rising to mark its final resting place. All this is accompanied by some throaty explosions and things – once again some of the best on the Amiga.

So it looks like the mission objective of a flight sim without the 'sim' has been achieved. *Thunderhawk* is, it has to be said, hugely enjoyable to play.

Just because it's fun though, doesn't necessarily mean it's going to be easy. Most of the normal flight sim elements have been sneaked in somehow, such as head up displays, radar jammers and chaff dispensers (for distracting enemy missiles), but not so that they intrude. The inescapable link sequences are all there too. As well as the animated intro, which comes on a whole disk of its own, there



Here's the usual flight sim weapons screen, where you load up your chopper before taking off. There's plenty of room for lots of everything – far more than a real copter could carry, that's for sure.

are scenario and mission briefings which go on for ages and contain some convincing film clips to explain your mission objective. They're great the first couple of times, but, well, ahem.

COMING BACK DOWN TO EARTH

And now, after heaping all that praise on the game, I hope you'll bear with me while I have a bit of a go at it. Don't get me wrong – I think it's an absolutely brilliant game and everything – but there's just one aspect I'm not entirely happy with.

It's the control system. Much has been made of the way all *Thunderhawk*'s controls have all been crammed onto the mouse, keeping the keyboard out of the arena for most of the time to maintain the game's 'arcade feel'. All very well, but I reckon they've gone a little too far. Putting the cyclic under mouse control is fair enough, as is using the left button to fire off weapons. But to alter the collective (check out the 'Helicopters' box if you're not sure what I'm on about) you've got to hold down the right button and move the mouse up and down. It just doesn't work, believe me, especially when you consider that the right button is also your weapons select control, and the program never seems quite sure which function you're after. And then, on top of all that, there's the 'rotation' control, which only comes in to play at low speeds, and again when you press the right button. I reckon they'd have done a lot better to have forsaken their 'arcade feel' in this instance and put the collective controls at the very least on the keyboard, and maybe the rotation control as well.

There's another thing too, while I'm at it. Again, presumably as part of Core's drive towards an arcade game, you can only tip your helicopter up to about 15 degrees in any direction. This is fine for everyday flying around, and means you won't find yourself going into any fatal powerdives or sideslips, but it's pretty annoying to have your chopper hovering just in front of a big, juicy target but being unable to take it out because it's just below where the program says you're allowed to aim your guns.

But enough of this fuming and ranting – I'd hate you to get the wrong idea. *Thunderhawk* really is a jolly impressive game, and one that continues to be fun to play even once you've explored all its possibilities over and over again. I'd hesitate to call it the best flight sim ever, simply because it isn't really one, but if it was it definitely would be. Um, hang on, I'll try that again. If you took *F-15 II*'s, erm, 'simulation-ness' and sellotaped it onto *Thunderhawk*'s everything else, then you'd have the best flight sim ever. What we've got instead is the best not-quite-a-flight-sim ever, and a cracking way to spend 30 quid. Got it? •

JONATHAN DAVIES

UPPERS Fantastic graphics and sound, easy to get in to, enormously playable and addictive – everything you could hope for in a game, really.

DOWNERS Well, I don't like the controls, but I seem to be on my own there. Apart from that it's pretty blooming hard to fault.

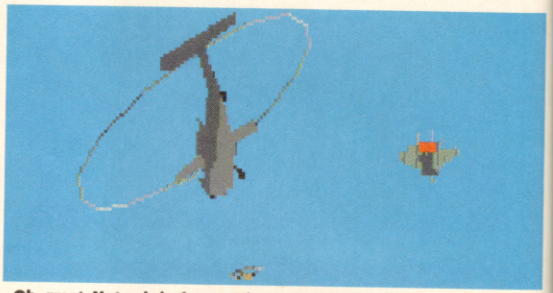
THE BOTTOM LINE

At last, a flight simulation for the layman. It's hard, but in a decent, honest sort of way, and at least it makes it easy for you to give as good as you get.

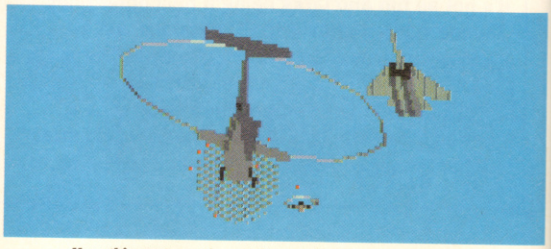
86 PERCENT

GETTING BEATEN UP NO2

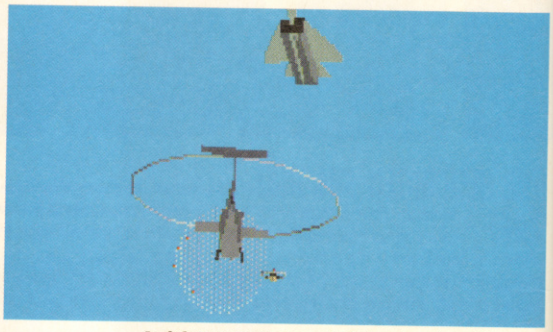
Why won't they just leave me alone? This time it's a MiG that's after me. All I want to do is protect a few measly oil rigs – it's not to much to ask, is it?



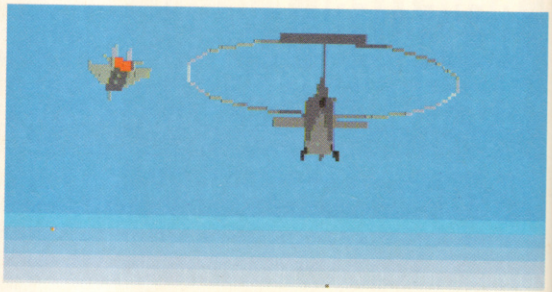
Oh, great. Not only is there a Mig 29 zipping by every five seconds, I've also got a helicopter gunship to contend with.



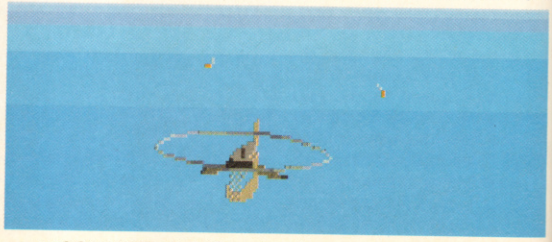
Hey, this guy's getting a bit too close for comfort! (It's that grey explosion thing again).



And there's another one! This is all getting a bit hairy.



A bit too hairy for me in fact. Let's wait until he's overshot me again (like so)...



...and then run like hell! (Though seeing as that MiG's so fast, the only way I'm going to really escape is to switch the Amiga off!)

MAGIC POCKETS

THE BITMAP BROTHERS

They've nicked his bike.
They've whipped his helmet.
This time they've gone too damn far...

NO ONE MESSES WITH THE BITMAP KID

features:

stacks of levels • heaps of weapons • swarms of intelligent nasties
bonus games • secret rooms • loads and loads of power-ups

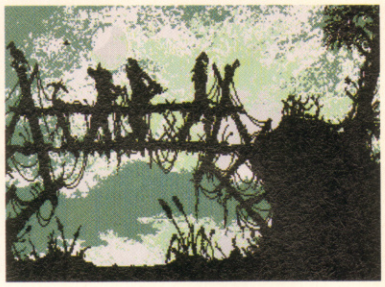
The BITMAP BROTHERS

Renegade

C1, Metropolitan Wharf, Wapping Wall, London E1 9SS
© 1991 The Bitmap Brothers. Published by Renegade

From the safety of your tower you can mix up the ingredients you've collected (on the left) in your cauldron (bottom right) to form spells which you can then store in the ten slots (on the right) which correspond to the function keys. Each spell requires a particular combination of the elements – Earth, Air, Fire and Water – which is indicated by the candlestick thing above your cauldron.

Not much energy left at this stage – you can tell by looking at the crescent moon.



Oh dear, oh dear. Nobody really seems to be taking this 'being evil' bit very seriously.

First advertised, it seems, around a year ago,

BLADE WARRIOR

Game: Blade Warrior
Publisher: Image Works
Price: £25.99
Author: Jason Kingsley
Release: Out now

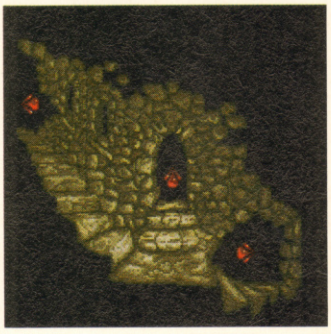
I've been having real trouble putting this review together, I can tell you. The first version (since deleted) was absolutely euphoric – *Blade Warrior* is one of those games that intoxicates you with atmospheric graphics and sound, making it easy to imagine that there just has to be a corking game underneath it all.

After putting in a few hours of overtime, however, I began to have my doubts. The basic front end was okay, but the 'game' part of it – all the interaction with other characters, spells and so on – seemed a bit thin, a bit superficial. So I wrote another review to that effect.

Then I played it some more (just to make sure) and started really getting into it again. Or at least, I think I did. So I scrapped that review too. And now, with a blank page in front of me again, well... um... to tell the truth I'm just not sure whether I like it or not. It has its strong points – the very unusual graphics style for a start – certainly, but just as it seems to be starting to grip, it doesn't. And then it does again. I know, I'll tell you a bit about it while I have another think.

QUITE UNLIKE ANYTHING BEFORE

One thing I do know is that it's one of those 'do the graphics and then try and work a game around them' jobs. And the graphics, it has to be said, are brilliant. They're done in an incredibly spooky silhouette style, so, rather than being packed with colour, everything's just black on a pale, pastely background. It might sound like a bit of a cop-out, but the amount of detail that's been crammed in, combined with some quite beautiful animation, a few stunning backdrops, a bit of parallax scrolling, and some really weird sound effects creates an audio-visual, um, 'experience' that's quite unlike anything I can remember seeing before.



A gratuitous picture of the stairwell in Mr Blade Warrior's tower. Spooky, eh?

I can also say for sure that for the most part the game is a scrolling beat-'em-up, shadow puppet-style. You're 'Blade Warrior', and you can roam backwards and forwards across the landscape, up and down hills and over bridges, hacking away at any baddies that leap at you from the bushes. These range from weedy (but nonetheless pretty frightening) giant spiders to trolls, skeletons, vampires and lots more. Occasionally you'll come across gateways which lead to other paths. (The paths all join up into a big map, a picture of which can be called up by pressing 'M'.) The pathways near your start position are populated with the softer baddies, but things hot up as you get further into the game, meet stronger baddies and (hopefully) become more and more powerful yourself.

'it's one of those "do the graphics and then try and work a game around them" jobs'

DARK, ATMOSPHERIC AND HAZY

From then on things get a little hazier. There's this plot, you see: the world has been enslaved by the evil Murk, and you've got to free it by collecting the seven fragments of a tablet which are in the possession of seven wizards who live in seven towers. It's a bit crap, isn't it?

Getting the message across, Olde English style, in *Blade Warrior*'s communication screen.

Of course, the first thing people notice about *Blade Warrior* is this odd graphic style...

Image Work's unusual looking *Blade Warrior* at last arrives on the Amiga.

...some hate it, some like it, and many are, erm, 'not sure.' Us? We like it...

...or, at least, we *think* we do. Certainly, it's just because you can't see everything...

...that the game really manages to drag you into itself imagination-wise, the mind's eye...

...imagining far better detail than you could ever really hope to see on screen.

Yes, we know it all looks very confusing in these still screens...

...but once something starts moving, all becomes clear. A-ha! There he is!

The only question is, does it work?

'Co-existing rather uncomfortably with the beat-'em-up element is an adventurey one'

What it means is that co-existing rather uncomfortably with the beat-'em-up element is an adventurey one, where you've got to collect Artefacts and give them to the right wizards in exchange for bits of tablet. You can also trade other things with wizards, possibly in exchange for clues. The Artifacts are also quite handy for boosting your powers, so don't give them away until you really have to.

And then there's the magic side of things. As you wander around you'll come across ingredients which you can take back to your tower, pop into your cauldron and cast spells with. As long as you've got the recipe, that is. You start off with two of these, and more can be obtained from wizards if you can work out how.

While this is all very well, the question is whether these two completely different types of game have been brought together successfully. After some serious playing I reckon they have – just about – although it's still not completely satisfactory. Beat-'em-up fans might consider all the spells and things to be superfluous, while those who'd prefer to concentrate on solving the puzzles may well get annoyed at constantly getting jumped by baddies. A couple of other things to consider: there's no scoring system, so progress has to be judged on how much of the adventure you've pieced together, and there are a few little glitches, like the scrolling suddenly slowing down for no apparent reason, and spells remaining on screen after they've been used. Nothing too worrying though.

Me? I eventually decided that I was quite enjoying myself, and wouldn't mind splashing out on *Blade Warrior* at all. If nothing else, it has to be seen. •

JONATHAN DAVIES

UPPERS Breathtaking graphics, but lots of action and puzzling too. A complete solution is likely to be a long time coming.

DOWNERS The gameplay is unlikely to be to everyone's taste, and interest may (may) fade along with the initial attraction.

THE BOTTOM LINE

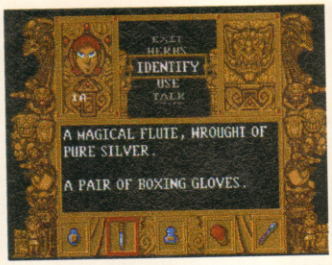
Visually superb, possibly the most atmospheric game ever, and with the gameplay to back it up. (I think.)

77 PERCENT

Fly Dragon Airlines – the quickest way to get from tower to tower. But be careful not to get shot down though, or you might get permanently stranded somewhere really dangerous!

Lush greenery in the foreground with picturesque skylines behind do *Elf* no harm at all in the presentation stakes.

Even the magical land of *Elf* succumbs to the changing of the seasons – this snow level crops up.



This is the bit where *Elf* gets clever. A mini communications and object manipulation screen adds depth to the proceedings.

Underground, overground, wandering free. The *Elf* goes subterranean for this level (but avoids the homesick blues).

Ocean take a break from their normal string of film and coin-op conversions to bring

ELF

Game: Elf
Publisher: Ocean
Price: £24.99
Author: Nirvana Systems – Paul Oglesby (graphics), Damien Slee (programming)
Release: Late September

When a couple of kids straight out of university decide to sit down, write a game, and hopefully become insanely rich overnight, you have to reckon on them making a right hash of things. After all, a thousand optimistic hopefuls have tried before, mostly armed with little more than a programming manual and ludicrous dreams of Porsche 911s and vacations in St Lucia – only to end up driving Minis and holidaying in Weston Super Mare.

That's not always the case though. Methinks that Paul Oglesby and Damien Slee – aka Nirvana Systems – have a rather better chance of dragging themselves out of the quagmire of mediocrity than most. Judging by their first project, *Elf*, these boys are going places.

SO WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT THEN?

Well, it's one of those arcade adventure 'romps' which just happens to be bursting at the breeches with gameplay, nice characters, wicked bad guys and some wonderfully weird humour. We're talking eight levels of running, jumping, collecting, killing, and puzzle solving fun.

The so-called story has the main character Cornelius (he's the *Elf*) separated from his woman by one Necrilius the Not Very Nice guy – the rest of the game is spent wading through forests, castles, labyrinths and mountainscapes in search of his babe. Yes, plotwise it's as corny as they come, but – hey! – at least it only took me 50 words to explain.

The first level is set in a wildly green and busy forest populated by pets and herbs (which you must collect) and wicked animals, spooks and monsters which you must shoot. Immediately, you'll notice something about the game's movement which differs from many of these platform things. Instead of the normal smooth scrolling, it's all burst scrolling.

Each screen (and there are about a hundred on every level) acts as a little puzzle in its own right, and when you reach the end of the screen it shifts quickly (or in a burst) so that your character is moved into a whole new picture. At first this effect is ever-so-slightly unnerving, but soon enough it feels perfectly natural. To add to the tension there's a time limit on each screen. Overstep your time (or indeed get killed any other way) and it's onto a wonderful death screen in which your cute character goes to the guillotine, and loses his marbles (literally).

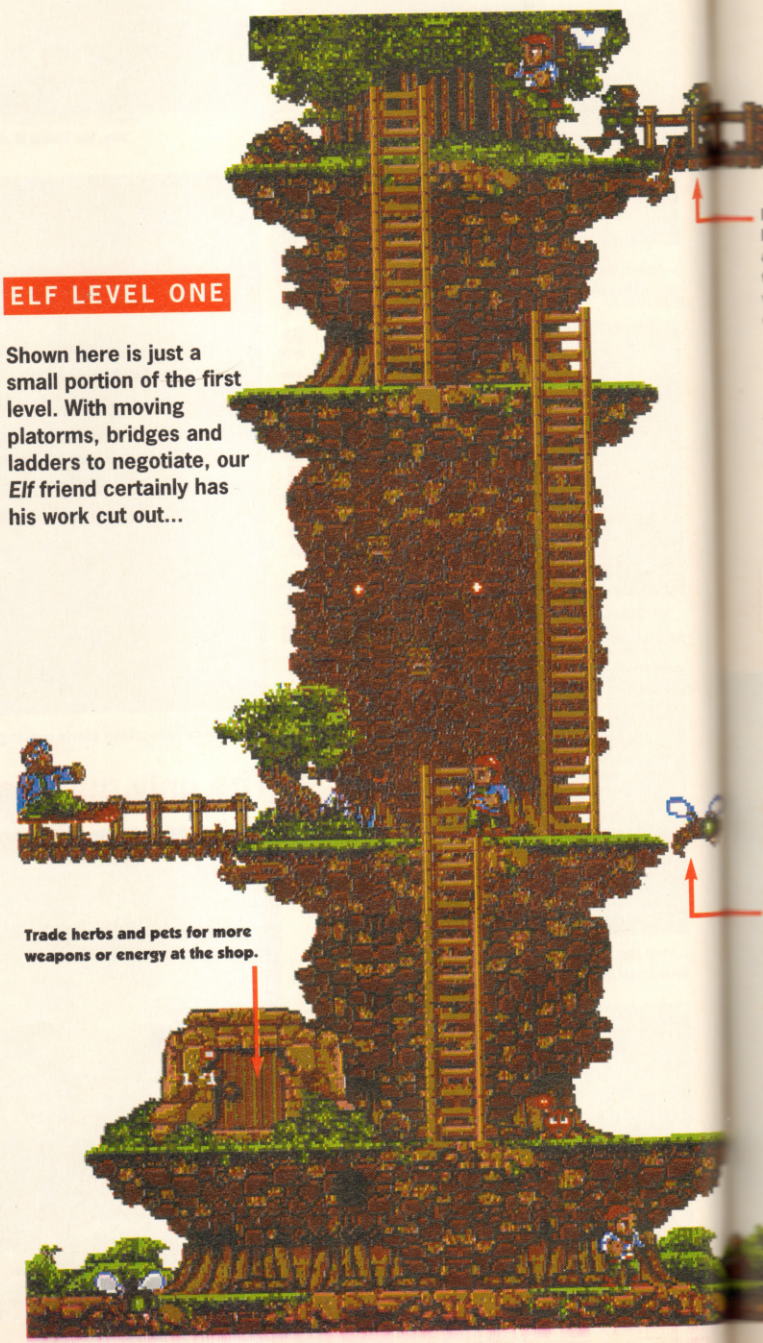
'It's bursting at the breeches with gameplay and weird humour'

As you run and jump through the forest you'll see lots of little characters rolling around or buzzing about. On the whole it's obvious what's a pet and what's a pest. You can pick up endless goodies and trade them in for extra lives, stronger powers, or vicious weapons at any of the shops, normally easy to find.

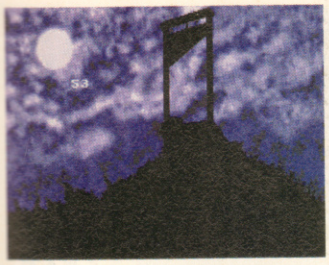
It's quite useful to buy invincibility ratings which, while they only last a few seconds, can get you through quite a few sections in no time at all. Or you can

ELF LEVEL ONE

Shown here is just a small portion of the first level. With moving platorms, bridges and ladders to negotiate, our *Elf* friend certainly has his work cut out...



Trade herbs and pets for more weapons or energy at the shop.



The Elf has ceased to be, it is no more. This animated guillotine scene (the blade comes down and chops his head off) crops up whenever our hero dies.

Living on the ledge – *Elf* is not the sort of game you want to play if you're even *slightly* prone to vertigo.

The *Elf* – here equipped with his amazing flying shorts – up to his neck in the bizarre local flora and fauna (as usual).

Chocks away! *Elf* takes to the skies and goes on a bombing mission.

platform game that's a little gentler, a little more, well, whimsical, to Amiga owners.

If you fall from a great height, it's curtains, although it is possible to turn yourself into a wolf which gives you a fighting chance to survive.

The forest has eyes, but thankfully they are a purely cosmetic touch.

This plateau is static but *Elf* is littered with moving platforms too, making it just that little bit harder to get around.

Watch out for the giant wasp! His sting is very nasty indeed.

change into a wolf for falling great distances without hurting yourself. One nice touch is the availability of free hints in the shops. You'd think these would be there to help you get through the game, but really they're little anti-smoking messages or good living ditties. Yes, I know it sounds dreadfully self-righteous of the programmers, but it's been pulled off with sufficient tact and wit to make these bon mots a nice diversion.

FOLLOWING IN AN ELF'S FOOTSTEPS

At first you're running and jumping across brooks and obstacles, heading for moving platforms and negotiating paving stones or submergable river trees. But further into the game you can buy wings (which are really a pair of shorts strapped to your back!) and with their aid get around the place much more efficiently.

Above and beyond all the romping, there is an element of adventure involved. To get from one level to another you have to interact with someone – usually a wizard – in order to talk him out of a key or whatever.

You are presented with a number of options like talk, take or attack, and it's up to you to make the sensible moves. The solutions range from the painfully obvious to the infuriatingly obscure, but either way, it's all to the good.

There is no straight route in *Elf*. It really is a case of explore and backtrack until you find out exactly where you need to go. The landscape goes in every direction, and on each level there's no shortage of things to do. In fact, at first it seems that there is rather too much going on, but (fussy graphics aside) it's not nearly so complicated as it first appears.

So what about some criticisms? Well, although each level is obviously set in a different place (forest, mountain or castle), it's sometimes easy to forget where you are – there really isn't enough variety between the different sections.

And, while the gameplay is more than satisfactory, it doesn't have the instant appeal of something like *Rainbow Islands*. Many people will have some difficulty with the cluttered look of the whole thing, and sometimes it's nigh impossible to understand what the hell is going on.

'It doesn't have the instant appeal of something like *Rainbow Islands*'

That said, I can't help feeling that it's all the little touches, tricks and extras which make this such an engrossing escapade. New creatures with funny faces are forever popping up, and if you quite enjoy these fantastic creations, it's all very jolly. My only fear is that those more interested in hard core gameplay will find it all a bit twee, a bit frilly, a bit over the top. • *COLIN CAMPBELL*

UPPERS Colourful and stylish fun with enough wit to make this more than just another arcade adventure. Surprisingly good work from these new programmers.

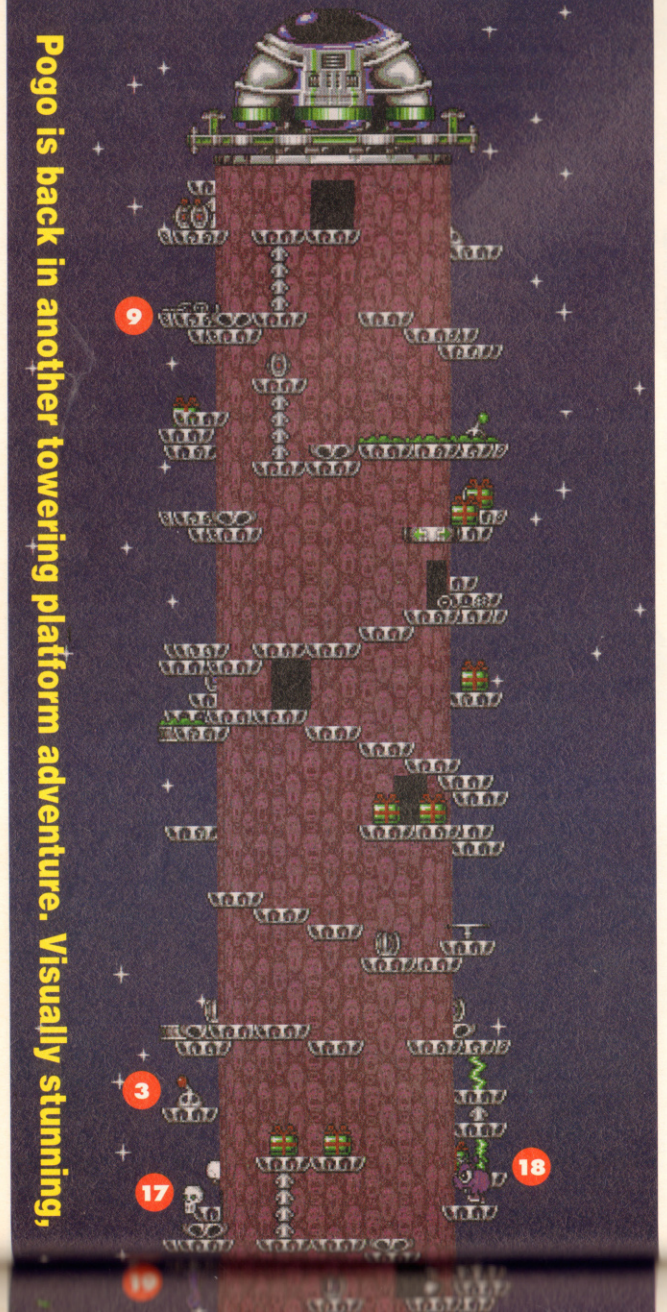
DOWNERS Fussy graphics, and a lack of variety between one level and another betray the fact that this game did not start life as a money grabbing coin-op machine.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Original and humourous, although not without its difficulties. A winner for anyone looking for a reasonable challenge, and a few laughs.

73 PERCENT

TACKLING A TOWER Pogo is beamed down to the first tower which sits in the Deadly Demon Dungeon. As Pogo makes his way up the tower, it rotates and everything moves accordingly.



Pogo is back in another towering platform adventure. Visually stunning,

NEBULUS 2

POGO-A-GO-GO

1 PARCEL – The special items Pogo can use to aid him in his quest are found in these.

2 LIFT – Pogo simply steps on and moves up or down as far as the lift will extend. Some stop at more than one position.

3 SWITCH – When thrown these affect the tower in some way – for example, by creating parcels or dynamite plungers.

4 TOWER PUSHER – This creature sits inside the tower, poking its head out to send Pogo tumbling only when he walks on by. Tower Pushers appear in different forms on later towers. All are removed with a Dynamite Plunger.

5 DYNAMITE PLUNGER – Explodes the corresponding Tower Pusher.

6 MOVING PLATFORM – It moves around the tower, like a horizontal lift.

7 SPRINGBOARD – A bouncy platform which allows Pogo to jump a lot higher.

8 DISSOLVING PLATFORM – Well I never! These dissolve beneath Pogo's feet.

9 ORGANIC GLUE PLATFORM – Pogo slows down when he walks over one of these.

10 HAZELNUT CLUSTER – Don't touch these – they knock Pogo down. Shoot them to make them disappear. (Hazelnut Clusters also appear in a slightly shorter form which is a lot harder to identify).

11 FIZZY BARRIER – A charge of electricity (or something) which blocks Pogo's progress. Sometimes they only appear when Pogo walks into them. In actual fact, they seem pretty pointless to me – why not just block off Pogo's progress with the standard issue barriers?

Game: Nebulus 2: Pogo-A-Go-Go
Publisher: 21st Century Entertainment
Price: £25.99
Author: John M Phillips (original concept), Infernal Bytes, Paul Chamberlain, Barry Simpson (design), Florian Sauer (programming), Tobias Prinz (graphics), Barricade Software (sound)
Release: Late September

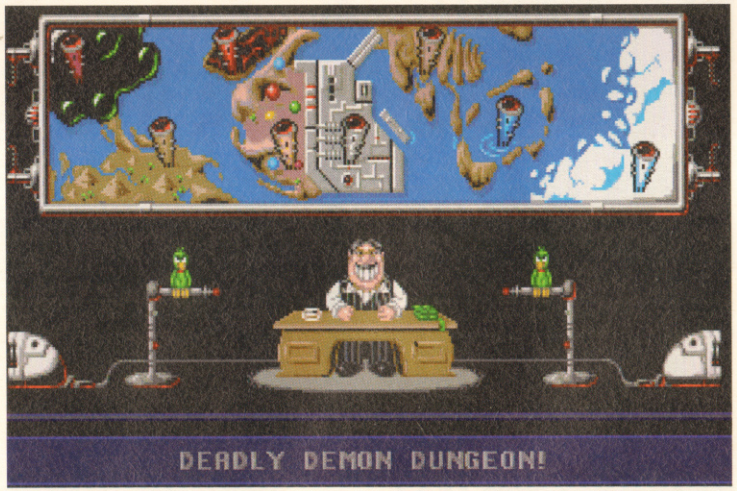
It's a rare and beautiful thing when a sequel is anywhere near as impressive as its predecessor. *Operation Thunderbolt*, *R-Type II* and *Speedball 2* are debatable successes, but that's about yer lot. So why does anyone bother? Well, because you can cash in on the success of the original, that's why. There is no other reason. This doesn't explain why anyone other than those who seek to benefit financially should invest in sequels though. Experience is more often than not simply thrown out of the window by the lure of more of the same.

SPRING IN THE STEP, TWISTED TALE

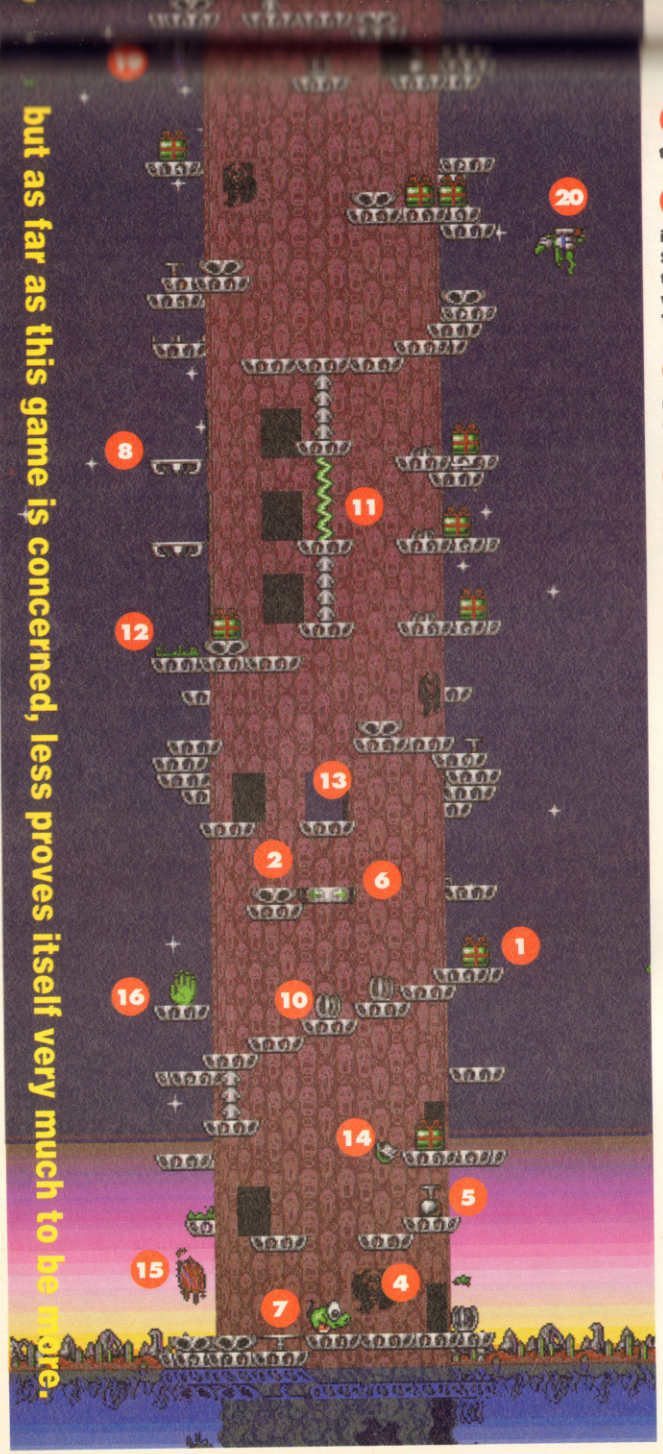
There is a twist, however: not only does Pogo have to topple the towers, he also has to repair them afterwards by walking over at least 80 percent of the crumbly platforms. The story reveals that the platforms are in fact solar panels of sorts which are used by the towers to produce oxygen for the planet on which they reside. That's why they need to be fixed. Well whoopy-bloody-do.

Fortunately the creatures (or bad platforms for that matter) don't kill Pogo on contact – he's simply knocked back down the tower. This is more often than not frustrating enough, but to make matters worse some of the creatures and platforms knock Pogo so far down the tower that you are left wondering why you bothered. Only when Pogo is knocked into the water below or his time limit expires does he actually lose a life.

Between towers Pogo has the chance to earn bonus points and some extra time via one



Here he is – the evil Uncle, sitting behind his desk with a map of his world behind him. As Pogo reaches the later towers, the Uncle gets more and more miffed until steam starts comeing out of his ears.



12 BLOBBY PLATFORMS – Ouch! They make Pogo fall when he touches one.

13 DOORWAY – They usually lead to another doorway somewhere else in the tower and on the same level. Sometimes they don't lead anywhere though. Some doorways are locked, which is why Pogo needs the keys (see THOSE OH-SO-SPECIAL FEATURES).

14 ORBY ORB – Simply bounces up and down (or sometimes they go round and round) at a set height. It cannot be destroyed.

15 HEARTY HEART – Moves up and down the tower as far as the platform arrangements will allow. A single shot removes it from the scene.

16 HANDY HAND
Continually rise up out of a platform before going back down into it. They make a grabbing action as they go and cannot be destroyed.

17 SKULLY SKULL
Bounces around or up and down like a good 'un. Happily, some of them can be destroyed with a few well-placed shots.

18 CHUCKY CHUCK
Spins right round (like a record, baby, right round), throwing out small skulls as it does so. It cannot be destroyed.

19 TENTY TENTACLE
It hangs from platforms and behaves like a groping tentacle. It cannot be destroyed.

20 JETTY JETPACK
Appears at set intervals on the same level as Pogo from the right-hand side of the screen and makes its way across to the left. It makes Pogo tumble at its touch, and it cannot be destroyed.

And so to *Nebulus 2* – more of the same, with plenty of new features, but not from the man who made such a sterling job of the original. Ah ha! So there's a chance that fresh blood could make a difference.

Some hope.

TOWERS OF LIFE, THE UNIVERSE, EVERYTHING

This time around Pogo's got caught up in some superfluous storyline concerning a chubby criminal called The Uncle. This fat felon has taken control of the Towers Of Life (so-called because they provide oxygen for the planets on which they stand) and has placed dozens of nefarious creatures on them to keep the Space Police at bay. Now The Uncle has the towers in his possession he's blackmailing the planets for money. And he'd get away with it, too, if it wasn't for Pogo.

Pogo uses the arrangements of platforms placed around the sides of each tower to make his way to the very top. When he gets there, the tower is destroyed. But of course, there's more to it than that. For a start, the evil Uncle's creatures are patrolling the platforms. The platforms themselves present problems, too – some disappear, while others are unpleasant to the touch (see TACKLING A TOWER).

NEW IMPROVED FEATURES-A-GO-GO

But what of those new features? Apart from the creatures and platforms, *Nebulus 2* has six special features, all of which have to be used at some point during play (see THOSE OH-SO-SPECIAL FEATURES). Sadly, few of *Nebulus 2*'s new features have much worth. I get the impression that they were introduced purely for the sake of it. Take, for example, the Tower Pusher. It's effectively a bad platform in a different guise with a switch in the form of the Dynamite Plunger which has to be found and detonated to explode the beast or turn it off. Fine – in principle it's a reasonable puzzle to have to solve. But more often than not the bombs are situated immediately before the creature and so little skill is required to pass it.

The towers simply aren't as well designed as they were in the original *Nebulus*, →

of three sub-games (see THE SUB-GAMES). Unfortunately the sub-games last too long and the incentive to succeed isn't strong.

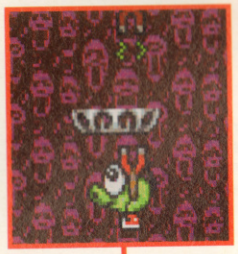
REPAIRING TOWERS
The towers are destroyed by climbing up them but repaired by going down them and walking over at least 80 percent of those slimy-looking platforms. Otherwise, it's pretty much business as usual – except that you fall 'up' the screen, which looks very silly.

THOSE OH-SO SPECIAL FEATURES

With a parcel collected, Pogo can choose which Special Feature he requires. He can hold a maximum of five of each Special Feature, using them whenever he sees fit. I wouldn't bother with them if you didn't have to use them to get anywhere. But, unfortunately, you do.

KEY – Used to open locked doorways.

MAGNET – Some platforms are magnetic, in which case Pogo can use a magnet to pull him up. Sometimes.



JUMPING BOOTS
Puts a spring in Pogo's step and allows him to jump a little higher – but only once.

ROCKET – Well strap a rocket to Pogo's back and race once around the tower, knocking out any creature in his path. Oh, you did.

ALL-SEEING EYE
Allows Pogo to check out the situation by flying up, down and around the tower.

MATTER TRANSPORTER – Allows Pogo to use the Transporter Platforms.

NEBULUS SUB-GAMES

The original *Nebulus* had one pun-believable sub-game – collecting fish from the confines of a small submarine. *Nebulus 2* has three, all with the same objective: to collect extra time for the next tower he tackles. Seen here is the *Air* sub-game. Pogo pedals his special helicopter and attempts to spike the birds which fly past. They then drop clocks which are collected for... you guessed it: extra time. But wait! The birds eventually rumble Pogo's game and so drop bomb-loaded balloons. Spiking the balloons before they reach the bottom of the screen stops the time Pogo has gained from being lost. In the *Land* sub-game, Pogo rides on the back of a stupid-looking donkey thang, avoiding obstacles and collecting parcels of time. The *Water* sub-game sees Pogo in the seat of a small submarine which is armed with a gun. Mine-bearing fish have to be shot to gain time, while shark, torpedoes and air bubbles are best avoided.

Get the clock, Pogo!

Plop those balloons Pogo!

Kaboom! Tower one bites the dust. Now it's on to a sub-game, then back to the same tower (with different platform layout) to rebuild it . Nobody ever said *Nebulus 2* was logical.

which isn't surprising given the quantity of new features that have had to implemented somewhere along the line. It's a bummer though, as the puzzle element – ie, figuring out how to ascend the platform arrangements – isn't anywhere near as apparent as it should be. There do seem to be some circumstances where towers are seemingly impossible to complete, and there are too many instances where you have to wait around, stuck, with nothing to do until Jetty Jetpack arrives (see TACKLING A TOWER). It's not only during play that you get stuck – it happens on the front end with delay after delay and disk accessing galore. There's a plethora of options but most of them can only be activated at a certain point in the front end, which seems a bit silly to me. And yet the programmers have found the time to implement such stupid options as being able to change the colour of Pogo and the skyline. Ah yes, and before I forget – the password system. To save you having to play through to the later towers, the programmers have implemented a password system. Unfortunately, the passwords have to be entered like 'type-in' cheat modes – very user-friendly I don't think.

Sound-wise, *Nebulus 2* is a bit of a mixed bag. There are many tunes in evidence (you can hear them all via a simple Special Music Show, but don't because you can't quit it and have to reload) but none of them rises above plain dull. The spot effects however are far more interesting. Not only are there lots of them, most are top quality and used to good effect. For example, when Pogo's negotiating the lofty heights of the top of the tower there's a neat tall building-type wind noise to be heard.

Nebulus was a single disk and a single load. For some bizarre reason *Nebulus 2* comes on three disks and loads... well, loads. At first you spend more time watching the drive light do its thang than actually playing. Every level is loaded individually, which wouldn't be so bad if the first was always resident. But it isn't – even with a memory expanded Amiga. 'BONUS RAM DETECTED... FILLING UP!' the program proudly declares. Filling up with what? Nothing to minimise delays, that's for sure.

Nebulus 2 offers twice as many features as the original but sadly only half the fun. Far too much effort is required of the player for too little reward. What a sad lack of appreciation for the original *Nebulus*' fine qualities. I suggest you buy a copy of the first game instead. •

GARY PENN

UPPERS Some pleasant visuals, smart sound effects and a few interesting puzzles of sorts. The memory of the first *Nebulus* makes you expect great things.

DOWNERS Rank music, a frustrating front end, and far too many superfluous new features. The towers are often designed with little regard for the poor sap who has to actually play – and attempt to enjoy – them, while you are asked to play the sub-games far too often. The storyline doesn't make a great deal of sense either.

THE BOTTOM LINE

A missed opportunity for more of the same but in a different vein. Attempting to add to the first was a mistake. Hew... (ahem) 21st Century Entertainment have simply drowned the joyous simplicity of the original *Nebulus*. Its fans are in for a disappointment.

66 PERCENT

MEGA LO MANIA™

A GAME OF DESTRUCTION, EVOLUTION AND POWER!

Every new civilisation needs a God to oversee them, and this is your once in a lifetime opportunity to achieve supreme power and immortality. The arena is a vast glass orb at the top of the universe in which all new planets are conceived and nurtured and it is your task to steer your race through a fierce and bloody evolutionary war, to gain complete control of the planet. The game they play is a curious one, it is a game they call...

MEGA LO MANIA™

SCREEN SHOTS FROM AMIGA VERSION

IMAGE WORKS

Sensible SOFTWARE

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You can choose from eight different characters – and here's where you do it.

GAUNT

US Gold's latest coin-op licence, erm, isn't. Instead, it's a home-

Our hero, currently looking rather overpowered by a bunch of ghostly types.

Would you believe this is the way out?

Ghosts appear from generators. Destroy these at all costs.

A-ha! A treasure chest! Step right up for lots of lovely lolly.

A ghoulish nasty. There are rather a lot of these on level one – though sadly nowhere near the numbers you'd find in the two original *Gauntlet* games.

The stepping stones are the starting point for level one.

A SLICE OF LEVEL ONE

Each level scrolls over rather a lot of screens. Shown here is just a tiny portion based around your starting point – you can't really accuse *Gauntlet III* of being small.

Hurrah! I've just finished level one. Maybe I'm not as crap as everyone says after all. (Though, to be honest, it was a little bit easy).

Ta-da! Here's a sneaky look at level two, complete with caveman-style baddies and a groping hand that appear out of the ground (saucy).

LET III

'*Gauntlet III* isn't actually an arcade conversion at all'

me- grown sequel, never having seen an arcade in its life.

Game: Gauntlet III
Publisher: US Gold
Price: £25.99
Author: Software Creations
Release: October

It sounds really exciting, doesn't it? After all, *Gauntlets I* and *II* were massive smash hits in the arcades thanks to their four-player action and endless levels, and US Gold's conversions were a big success too. So, thrilled at the prospect of reviewing a big-name arcade licence, I nipped out to my local amusement arcade (Krazy Kevin's Koin-ops) eagerly clutching a fistful of 50p's in order to try out the original and draw up a few comparisons.

'Ain't never 'eard of it,' Kevin told me.

'But you must have it. Look – I've got the Amiga version right here.'

'Nah. You've been 'ad, mate.'

MAKING THE MOST OF A LICENCE

It transpires that *Gauntlet III* isn't actually an arcade conversion at all. It's more of an attempt by US Gold to wring the last possible drop of milage out of its aging *Gauntlet* licence, and perhaps stir up some interest in its back-catalogue. And there's nothing wrong with that, even though *Gauntlet III* bears only a passing resemblance to the originals (and even that's only in the name, to tell the truth). What really matters is whether it's anywhere near as good as the first two games.

So – is it? Erm, well, no, not really, but it's not too bad all the same. The trouble is that it takes all the features that made *Gauntlet* the hit it was (four players, millions of cunningly-planned levels, simple but compulsive gameplay etc) and throws about half of them away. It then messes about with what's left a bit, and ends up with something that doesn't quite feel the same, somehow. Having said that, it's a perfectly good game in its own right, with a couple of interesting features.

'It has its faults, but *Gauntlet III*'s too good to dismiss'

THE SAME AGAIN, BUT DIFFERENT

Gauntlet III's main departure from *Gauntlet* is, as you'll doubtless have spotted, that it's in 3D. No more little coloured blocks with all the spaces in between crammed with baddies jostling to get to you. Instead each level is drawn in attractive, isometric 3D which lends more of an adventurey than an arcadey feel to the game.

And that's the other thing. It does have slight adventure overtones, although thankfully not enough to obscure its roots as an arcade game. Rather than simply shooting your way to the exit through level after level, you've got tasks to perform. To complete the first stage, for example, you've got to find a bucket, take it to a well to get a key, take the key to the altar in the church and then leg it back to near your starting point within a time limit, where a bridge to the exit will have appeared. Each step is clearly explained, so there's no actual thinking to do, and it all works pretty well. (The next stage is a bit crapper, though.)

There's also some excellent but very repetitive music, where perhaps some sound effects might have been more useful. I mean, what's *Gauntlet* without the occasional cry of 'Blue Elf shot the food' or 'Red Warrior – your life force is running out'? And... Oh dear – I'm starting to pull it to bits already. Right, seeing as we're on the subject, here goes:

The main snag is that it's incredibly easy. You tend to accumulate life force much quicker than you loose it, even if you're as useless as me. That means completing the thing will be more of a test of endurance than skill.

Then there's the fact that exits are two-way. No problem in itself, but if, after emerging on a new level, you inadvertantly flip the joystick in the wrong direction you go back to the previous one, with the 30 seconds of disk accessing that entails, and then another 30 seconds to get back again. Er, what else? Well, each level is several screens wide and several screens high, but you can only tell if you've reached the edge of the playing area when the scrolling stops and you can't go any further – there are no walls or anything. This looks highly naff. And so does the collision detection for that matter. You sometimes have to hit a piece of food at just the right angle to be able to pick it up. Oh yes, and you can only have two players. There also seems to be a limitation on the number of sprites on screen at once, so you won't see screens brimming with baddies as in the original. Quite a list, eh?

The barbarian's gone indoors now, ready for some more ghost-bashing. Up at the top right of the screen there's some delicious food, just waiting to be scoffed.

A decidedly un-cryptic clue. Can you work it out?

So it has its faults, but *Gauntlet III*'s too good to dismiss as a waste of money. I suppose I'm being ever so slightly generous (being an ever so slightly generous sort of person), but I still found it quite fun. In fact, I reckon it deserves a bit more than the 'low sixties' mark everyone suggested I gave it. So it can have a 'mid sixties' one instead.

• *JONATHAN DAVIES*

GAUNTLET III VS GAUNTS I & II

So, *Gauntlet*, eh? One of the best things about it (and the sequel *Gauntlet II*) was all the baddies it threw at you. Individually they were mere cannon fodder, but when you got literally hundreds of them pouring out of generators on all sides of you it was no laughing matter. (Unless one of your fellow players was trapped in front of you and took all the flak – that was quite funny.)

Load up a copy of *Gauntlet III* and you'll find yourself in a similar position. All our old friends are there, in slightly reduced numbers, from the humble ghost to Death himself. It's also got those wizard-types who keep disappearing and sneaking up on you, and the blokes wih clubs who take ages to kill. And there are a few new additions to the family too. Sentries march up and down across doorways (making them an easy target). Killer plants spring up out of the ground and take chunks out of your leg. And there are probably quite a few others as well.

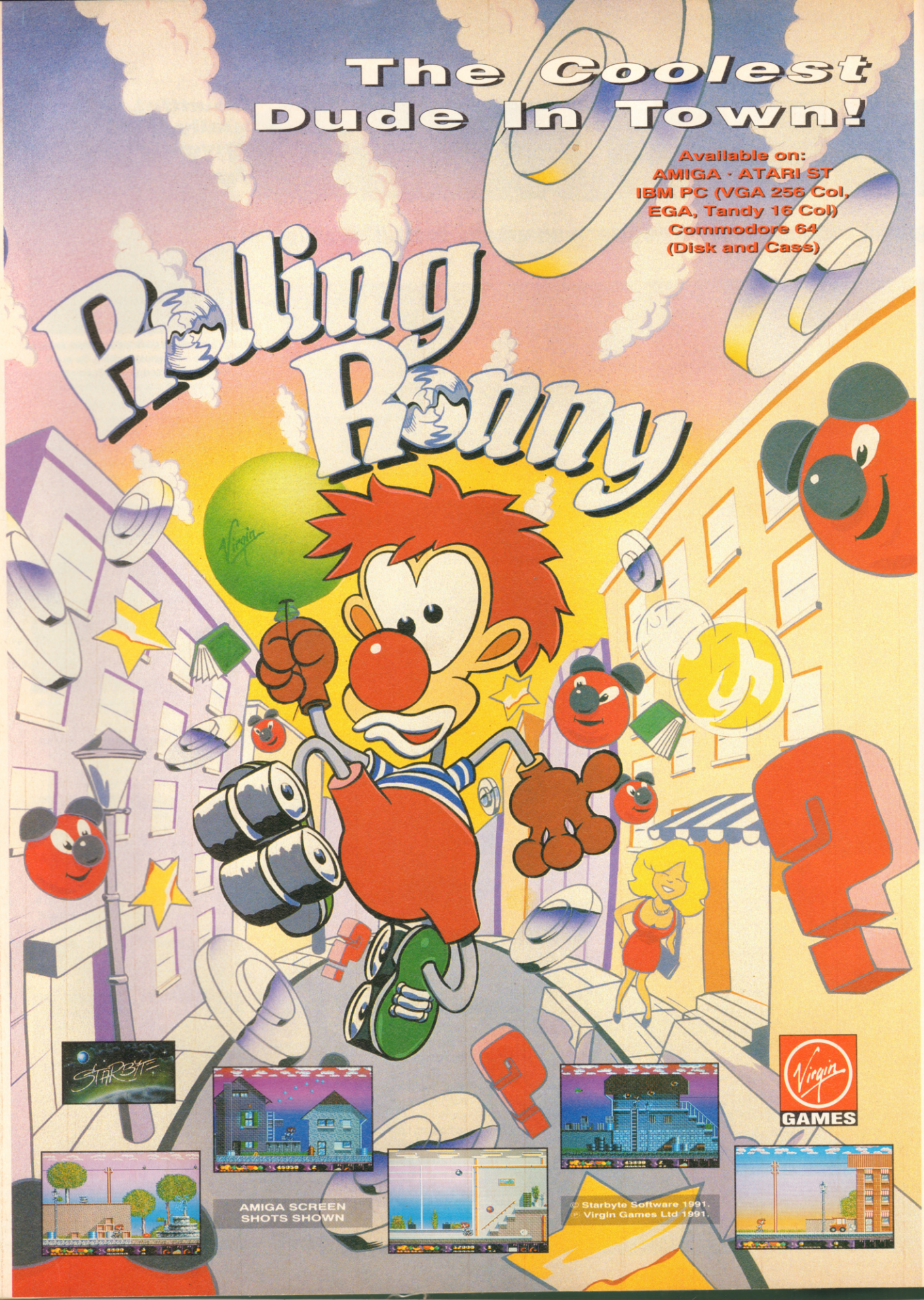
UPPERS The graphics are pretty, and it packs in most of the original's appeal with a few extras thrown in too. Plus, there're plenty of levels for your money.

DOWNERS Unfortunately it's much too easy, at least to start off with, and some of the coding looks a little bit ropey. The fast and frantic four player action of, say, *Gauntlet II* is totally missing too.

THE BOTTOM LINE

A flawed but perfectly playable game. Just don't expect it to be *Gauntlet III*. (If you see what I mean.)

67 PERCENT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Complete control

Tips, tips, tips. You want tips, we got tips. In addition to an insurmountably large collection of quickies, we've got the second part of our *Gods* playing guide, and part two (in a series of three) to Gary Penn's most excellent *Prince Of Persia* playing guide. What more could you ask for?

CHEATING THE ACTION REPLAY WAY

Owners of Datel's Action Replay cartridge will alread know what a useful device it is, but one of its less-frequently used capabilities is the facility to poke infinite lives cheats etc. Now, courtesy of Craig Hobden of Hull, AMIGA POWER brings you a big juicy set of cheaty type things for a whole slew of games.

Now poking with Action Replay is just a tiny little bit complicated, so you'll need some instructions. First load the specified game, then press the big red button to freeze the action. Type 'M' immediately followed by one of the given addresses (eg type M6529 for *Paperboy*), and you'll be presented with a list of numbers looking not unlike this:

06 00 99 33 33 22 43 22 11 33

Only alter the FIRST number or you may cause the game to crash. All you do is pop in a new value (such as 99) and when you jump back into the game (by typing 'X'), you will have a greatly improved number of lives, amount of time, level of fishiness, or whatever (depending on the game in question).

GAME	FUNCTION ALTERED	ADDRESS TO POKE
Paperboy	Life counter	6529
Shadow Dancer	Life counter	1EB3C
Toki	Life counter	23CD9
Pacmania	Life counter	53EC
Line Of Fire	Credit counter Player 1 rockets Player 2 rockets	249 11F 14B
Chase HQ II	Turbo boost counter	335B3
Pang	Time counter Player 1 life counter Player 2 life counter	8A17 DFD5 E10F
Insects In Space	Life counter	C699
James Pond	Life counter	1B1
Kamikaze	Player 1 life counter Player 2 life counter	113 131
Vaxine	Credit counter	8F4
Soldier Of Light	Life counter	3830F
Mr Do Run Run	Life counter	1137
Super Hang-On	Time counter	6D36
Pacland	Life counter	AF23
Narc	Player 1 life counter Player 2 life counter	13967 13A2B

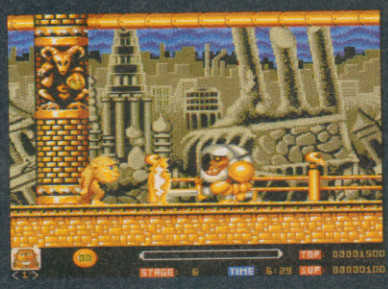
SWIV (The Sales Curve)

After defeating a Goosecopter, fire continuously at one of the tokens. After 32 hits, it will turn into a star, which when collected will yield mega-powerful six-way fire. Just be careful not to hit the token again before collecting it, or it'll revert back to the one of the ordinary power-up icons.

Paul Alexis, Leeds

TOKI (Ocean)

We had a letter this month from Richard Whitehouse of Harpenden, and he's having some terrible trouble getting past the second fire-breathing dragon on level three. Well, just for you, Richard, here's a cheat mode which should see you safely onto level four and beyond. Simply start the game and type 'KILLER', then use keys F1 to F7 to switch between levels. If you're some kind of weirdo, you can also press 'R' itself to turn the screen upside down and make things a little more interesting. When you get fed up of this, just press 'N' to turn everything the right way up again.



Having problems with Ocean's *Toki*? Don't be a chump chimp, just use our tips.

FANTASY WORLD DIZZY (Code Masters)

Somebody stuck with *Dizzy*? Surely not.

Miss Sammi Kendall of Cheltenham wrote in with a little problem on this classic Codies' adventure. 'I've been wandering around aimlessly trying to work out how to grow the beanstalk. I'm completely stuck!' Well, worry no more, as the beanstalk is simplicity itself. Take your pygmy cow down the well and go left to the shopkeeper, who will swap it for some magic beans. Go back up and plant the beans in the, er, manure, then simply use the bucket of water on them and watch that stalk shoot up.

FLOOD

For access to all of this recently re-released classic's 42 levels without all that tedious faffing about with different code words, simply use 'MEEK' as your password.

James Bellhouse, Leeds

Bullfrog's *Flood*: One password, 42 levels. What more could you ask for?

AWESOME (Psygnosis)

For infinite shields, fuel and money, simply follow these instructions from 'Alien' of Southport.

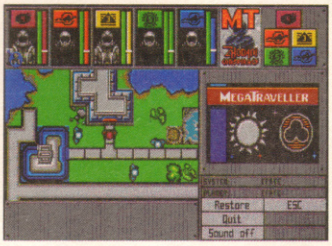
Survive the first round. Go to where it says 'SHIELD' on the weapon selection screen.

Psygnosis' low-key deep space blast-'em-up.

Hold down the '+' key on the keypad and press your fire button once. If done correctly the screen will flash once, and you will have the aforementioned infinite shields, fuel and cash. Also, you can transfer all of your shield energy to the cannons and the cheat will still be active. When you're walking on the planet surface, there are still no worries because the timers have been frozen as well (it says here).

MEGA TRAVELLER 1

This cheat from Chris Nyland of Gwynedd in Wales allows you to make colossal amounts of cash before starting the game. Let Chris tell you how...



Making headway in *Mega Traveller 1*, the utterly sadistic way.

1. Generate a party of characters which will eventually be your final team.

2. There should now be 15 spaces left on the disk.

3. Start to generate characters and keep them in the service they are in until they are forced to retire by old age. They will now receive large amounts for retiring (they earn most if they are scouts, and are less likely to get thrown out of this profession. They also stay in for more terms, which means more money at the end.), and also weapons and vacc suits.

NB If you are faced with the option of surgery early on in the characters' service to restore an attribute, in about 2nd to 5th term, take the risk as they are still quite expendable. There is always only one such occurrence in a career, if any, so if it can be 'over and done with' things will be easier in the rest of the career. If the character is older, however, he will have become more useful and should retire at the next opportunity, avoiding surgery.)
NB2 (If, when choosing your benefits, you select the same 'object' twice, always take a second (third...) object, as it is useful later.)

THESE CHARACTERS ARE NOT WORTH RE-ROLLING STATS FOR

It is, however, useful to boost stats during service in preparation for old age decline. Too lowa stat could result in death, and that would be a shame. Don't bother about useful levels either, they'll only be wasted!

4. Fill the rest of the character pool with these rich crumblies.

5. Start the adventure from scratch with one of the original members of your party and four of the crumblies. Go to the Starport and get everybody to deposit all of their money into an account. Now withdraw all of the money through the original party member (OPM) and put one credit into the account.

6. Go to the general store and make the crumblies sell all of their equipment (including armour and helmets), unless there is anything useful (in which case give it to the OPM to keep), giving all the money to the OPM.

7. Take the party outside and break up. Arm the OPM and shoot all of the crumblies.

8. Go back to the Starport, save out, and recruit four different crumblies from the disk, repeating the above procedure as many times as you like (just make more disks full of crumblies and switch them when all the crumblies on one disk have died).

9. Build a healthy wad of cash. When you get bored of this legacy-hunting, just recruit the other OPMs and continue play.

Chris goes on to say 'I found this a simple way to make money and I had earned lots of cash and equipment without feeling that I had cheated. Women do it in real life, so why not do it in *Mega Traveller*?' AMIGA POWER would just like to point out that there's nothing at all big or clever about misogyny, and that the opinions of contributors do not necessarily reflect the views of the management etc etc.

PREDATOR 2 (Image Works)

Pause the game, type 'YOUR ONE UGLY MOTHER' and unpause for infinite lives.

NARCO POLICE (Dinamic)

***Narco Police* – Almost, but not quite, a reasonable game.**

Try typing in the following codes for various effects:
MUNICION - Boost ammo up to full
NOENEMIG - No enemies
COMENZAR - Bring back enemies
ABRIR - Open any security doors
NOAMETZ* (Substitute * for sector number) - Turn off machine guns
NOCAMZ* (As above) - Turn machine guns back on

EDD THE DUCK (Impulze)

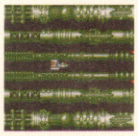
Fed up of *Rainbow Islands*? Why not play it all over again but without the good bits? At least you don't have to go through all the trouble of playing your way through all the levels, because, thanks to Brett Lowe of Burnley, you can simply press the left mouse button once during play to advance a level.

BUILDERLAND (Loriciel)

To see more of this strange but cute little game from France, use these level codes, supplied by Thureim Ne Win (it says here) from Brighton.

1 - BUILD1
2 - YOTTHA
3 - BEARBY
4 - OCTOPY
5 - DIABLO
6 - GOTIUS

ZIRIAX (The Software Business)

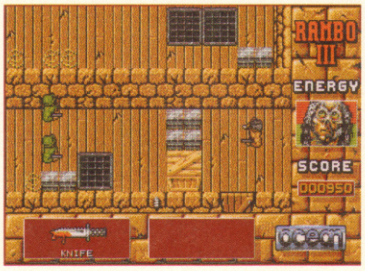


***Ziriax – R-Type II* it most certainly isn't.**

You may find this game just a touch more bearable if you press 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 while playing to light up the respective power-ups, then press Return to activate them.

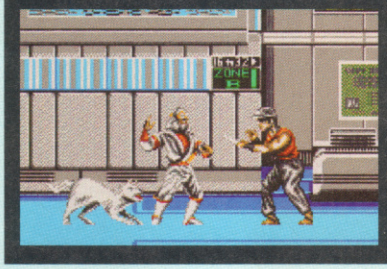
RAMBO III (The Hit Squad)

Yet another in our long running Great Cheats For Crap Games series, simply score over 5,000 points, and enter your name as 'RENEGADE' will allow you to access various levels by pressing the 1, 2, or 3 keys when you're on the high score table.



Newly re-released on budget, there's still absolutely every reason to avoid the tragic *Rambo III*.

SHADOW DANCER (US Gold)



During the game pause and type in 'GIVE ME INFINITES' (some schools of thought would have that it's 'GIVE ME INFINITY'), then press Return for infinite lives.

***Shadow Dancer*: A brilliant example of the beat-'em-up, or just a very sad excuse for a computer game?**

THE LIGHT CORRIDOR (Infogrames)

Jon Mitchell of Kingston Blount has been playing this game for several months (strange chap) and has generously decided to share with us all the level codes he's discovered. Take it away, Jon.

1 - 0000	11 - 9305	21 - 3212	31 - 2819	41 - 1926
2 - 5400	12 - 3406	22 - 0213	32 - 9919	42 - 9726
3 - 0101	13 - 0407	23 - 8213	33 - 7320	43 - 5927
4 - 3901	14 - 6407	24 - 5014	34 - 2521	44 - 0528
5 - 2602	15 - 2008	25 - 1015	35 - 0622	45 - 7328
6 - 9902	16 - 7408	26 - 8215	36 - 3722	46 - 3929
7 - 4303	17 - 4709	27 - 5116	37 - 1223	47 - 3030
8 - 9003	18 - 3810	28 - 7017	38 - 4523	48 - 0531
9 - 6904	19 - 0511	29 - 5518	39 - 4124	49 - 8431
10 - 3305	20 - 6811	30 - 2819	40 - 1825	50 - 9932

BOMBUZAL (Imageworks)

AMIGA POWER's No.1 *Bombuzal* fan, Gary Penn, got a bit of a surprise this month when we got a letter from Darran Pocock of Barking, who claimed that there was, contrary to popular belief, a pause mode in *Bombuzal*. Darran asserted that when you press the spacebar to access the overhead-view map screen, if you keep it held down the clock stops until you release it. Imagine our surprise, then, when we tried it out and found that it actually worked! 'Oh heck', said Gary, 'when I think of how much time that could have saved me when I was doing that blinking poster last month, I could almost weep.' Well, it was something like that, anyway...

DRAGON SPIRIT

If you're getting bored with playing the same old levels on this scrolling zapper, simply pause the game, type 'DRAGONHEAD', and press F10. Now you should find you can skip levels by pressing the corresponding number key.

James Bellhouse

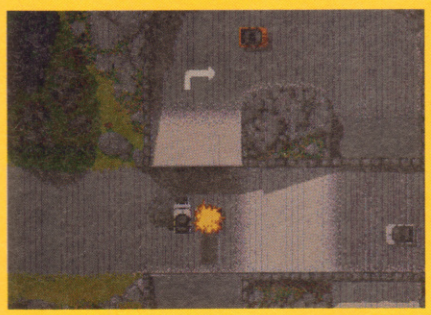
SPELLBOUND (Psyclapse)

Ha! *Spellbound*? More like *Bargain Bin Bound*.

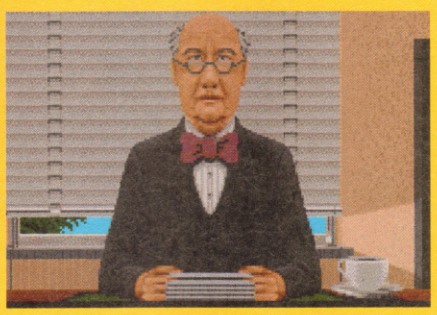
Thureim Ne Win (sic) suffered this frankly crap platform game for long enough to come up with the following incredibly amusing level codes:

2 - HEYY
3 - OUDI
4 - DYOU
5 - CALL
6 - MYPI
7 - NTAW
8 - OMAN

SUPERCARS II (Gremlin)



Another one bites the dust, in *Supercars II*. Warning: leaping 20ft gaps can damage your health.



This guy obviously has no sense of humour. Better answer his questions without any wisecracks.

Not content with our definitive series of maps in Issue 3 (no crappy diagrams in THIS mag, pal)? How about entering the players' names as 'Wonderland' and 'The Seer' for a groovy cheat mode with all kinds of neat things? Still not enough? In that case, what you need is a list of answers to some of the trickier questions you'll be asked by the game's various inquisitors between tracks. And guess, just guess, what we've got for you now?

AT THE LAWYER'S

Q. Did you know your great uncle well?
A. **We were like brothers, sob sob.**

Q. The deceased wants you to give the money to the home for orphaned lemmings.
A. **I'd prefer 'Cats Against The Bomb'.**

Q. Is this your first inheritance?
A. **Yes!**

Q. Could you describe your uncle?
A. **He was a short fat jolly man.**

AT THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Q. How many miles to the gallon does your car do?
A. **45mpg on petrol, 68mpg on orange juice.**

Q. Do you know what a catalytic converter is used for?
A. **Removing harmful gases from exhaust fumes.**

Q. What would you do if you saw a hedgehog on the road?
A. **Stop and move it to safety.**

Q. What are you going to do about your gas emissions?
A. **I'll buy a cat.**

Q. Didn't you know that your car is a noise pollution hazard?
A. **Yeah, so are New Kids!**

Q. Do you drive at an economical speed?
A. **I drive at a steady 56mph.**

Q. You're a good looking guy. How do you fancy dinner tonight?
A. **Er, sure, sweets!**

AT THE SPONSOR'S

Q. You wouldn't ruin our reputation by cheating, would you?
A. **I'm as honest as the day is long.**

Q. You realise we also have Mario Andrex on our racing team?
A. **We're the best of pals.**

Q. How can you enhance my company's image?
A. **My success will reflect on your company.**

Hubba, hubba. Okay, so maybe *Supercars II* was worth more than 73 percent after all.

AT THE DRIVING SCHOOL

Q. Which lane should you be in when reaching a roundabout, waiting to go straight on?
A. The left lane.

Q. Why did the chicken cross the road?
A. **To get to the other side.**

Q. What should you do if you are approaching a level crossing when a train is late?
A. **Don't worry, the train will be late!**

Q. A traffic warden gives you a ticket for being illegally parked, what do you do?
A. **Fire all remaining missiles.**

Q. What is the correct procedure for turning?
A. **Mirror, signal, brake, manoeuvre.**

Q. What should you do if you are reversing and another car approaches?
A. **Stop and wait for it to pass.**

Q. What is the speed limit in a built-up area?
A. **30mph.**

Q. What should you do if your brakes fail?
A. **Use the gears and handbrake to slow down.**

Q. What should you do if you are first on the scene of an accident?
A. **Call the emergency services and wait.**

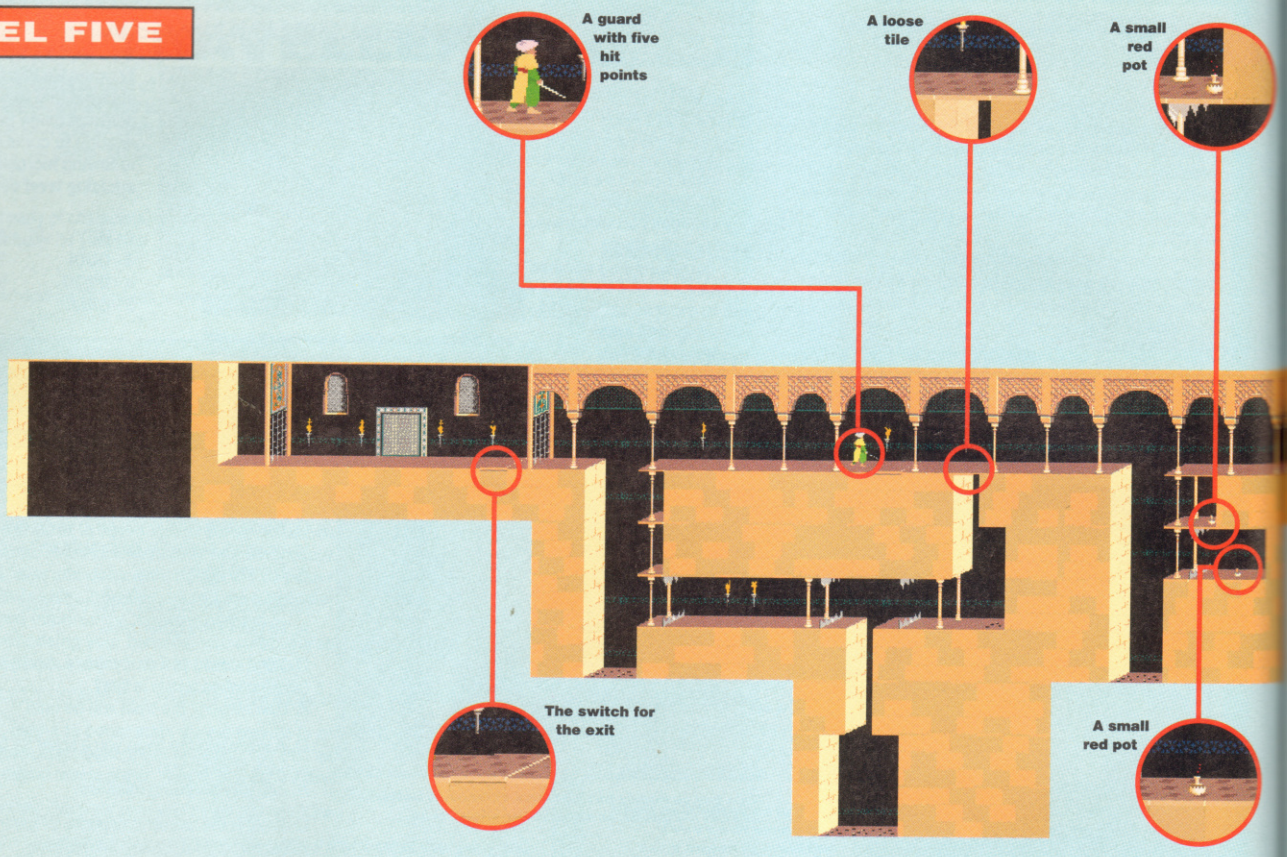
Q. What tyre pressure should the average tyre have?
A. **About 30 psi.**

Q. Approaching a left hand curve, where should your car be positioned?
A. **Near to the centre line of the road.**

Q. What should you do if anything falls from the vehicle on the motorway?
A. **Safely stop and remove the item.**

Zooming round in a car loaded with rockets can occasionally land you in hot water.

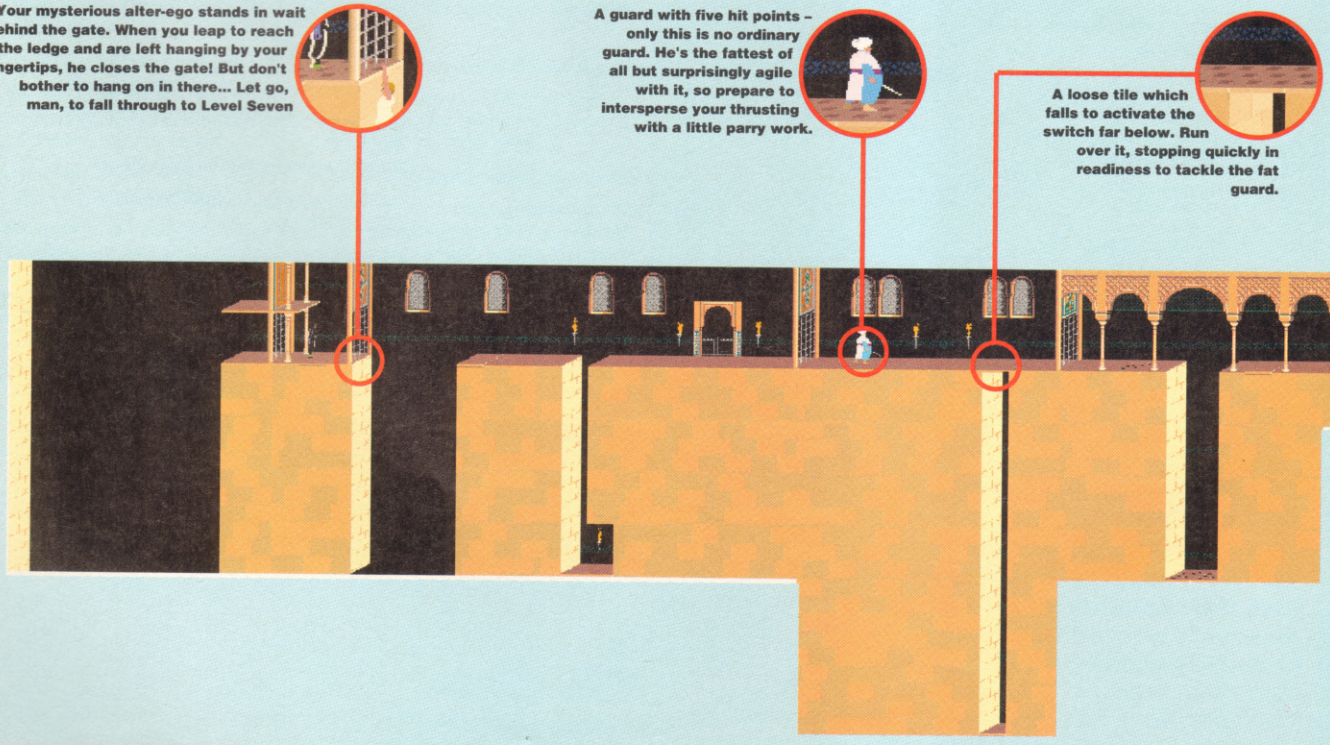
LEVEL FIVE



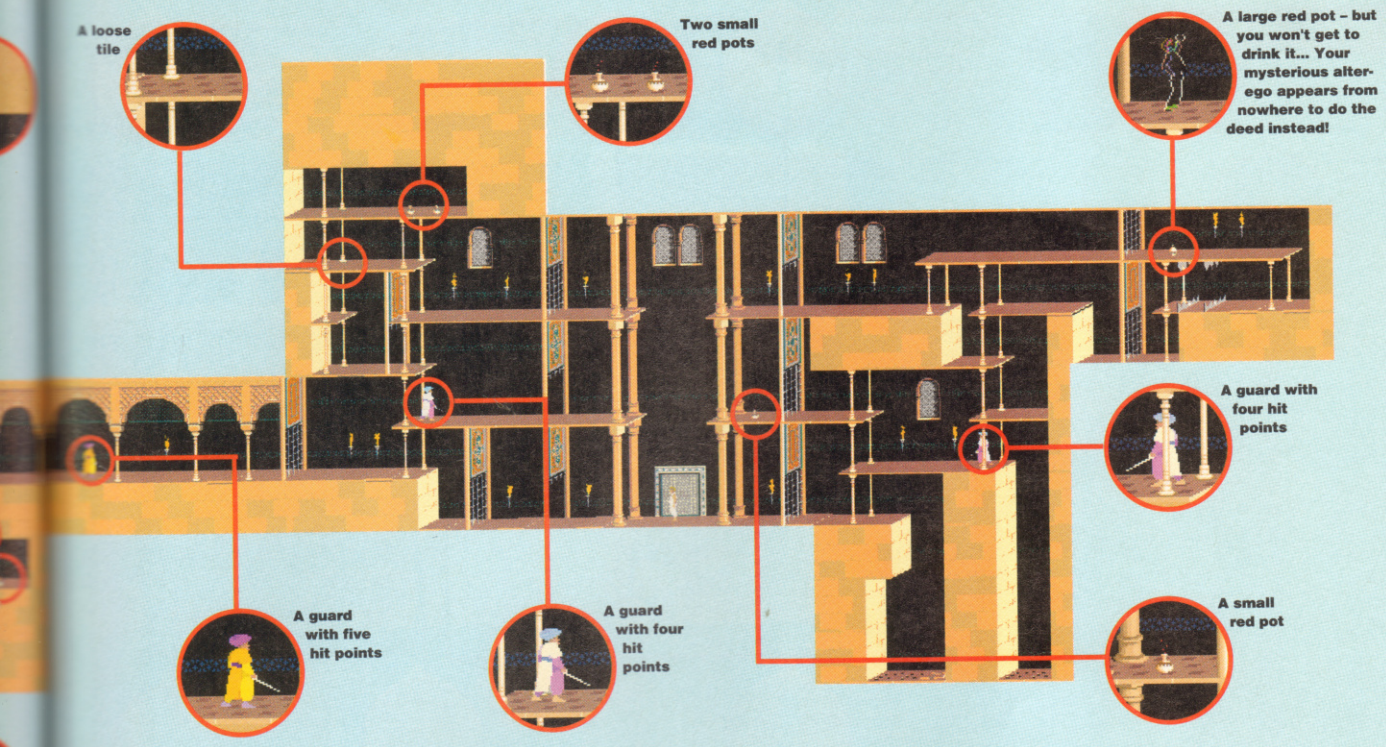
Your mysterious alter-ego stands in wait behind the gate. When you leap to reach the ledge and are left hanging by your fingertips, he closes the gate! But don't bother to hang on in there... Let go, man, to fall through to Level Seven

A guard with five hit points – only this is no ordinary guard. He's the fattest of all but surprisingly agile with it, so prepare to intersperse your thrusting with a little parry work.

A loose tile which falls to activate the switch far below. Run over it, stopping quickly in readiness to tackle the fat guard.

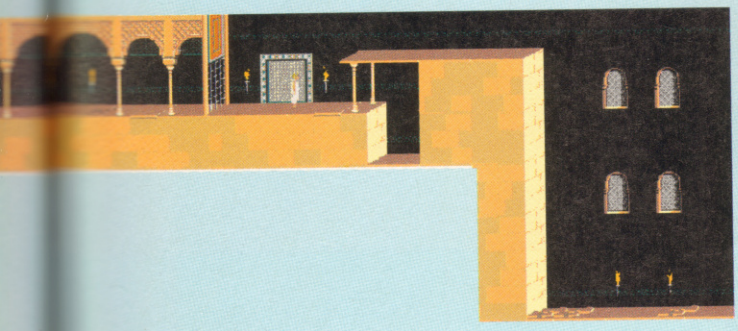


LEVEL SIX



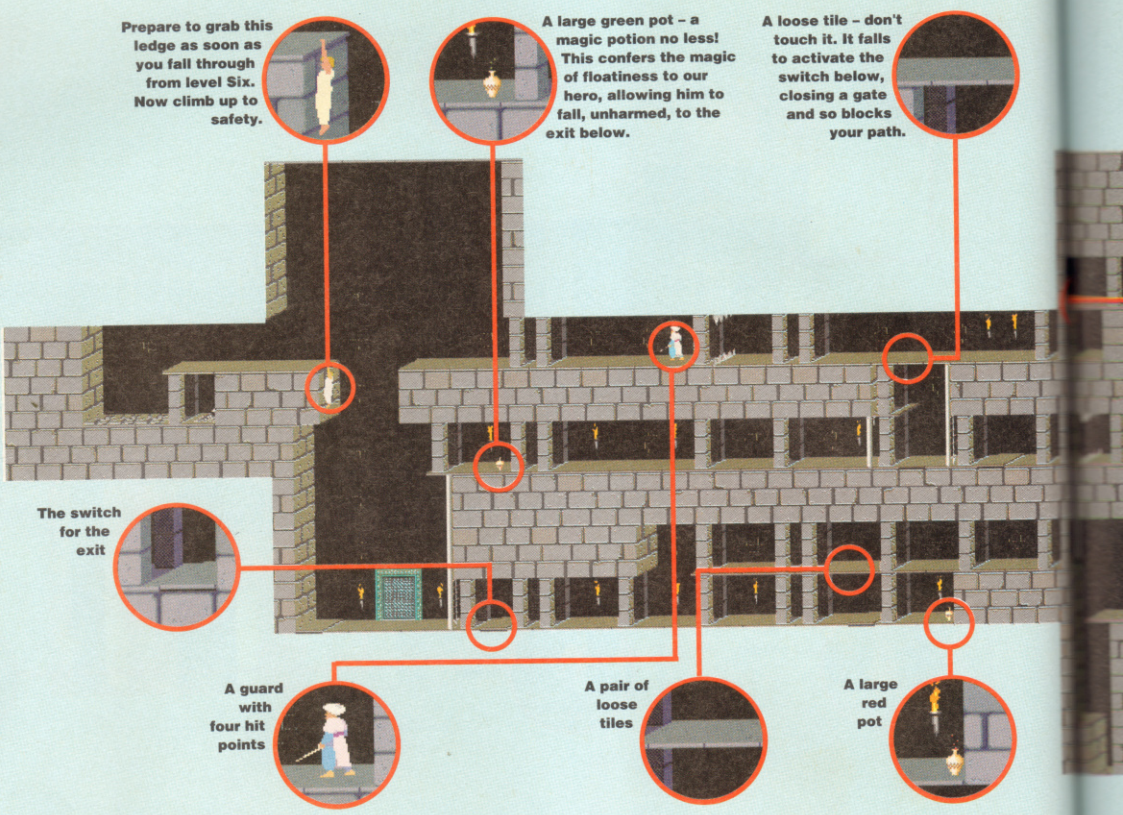
PRINCE OF PERSIA

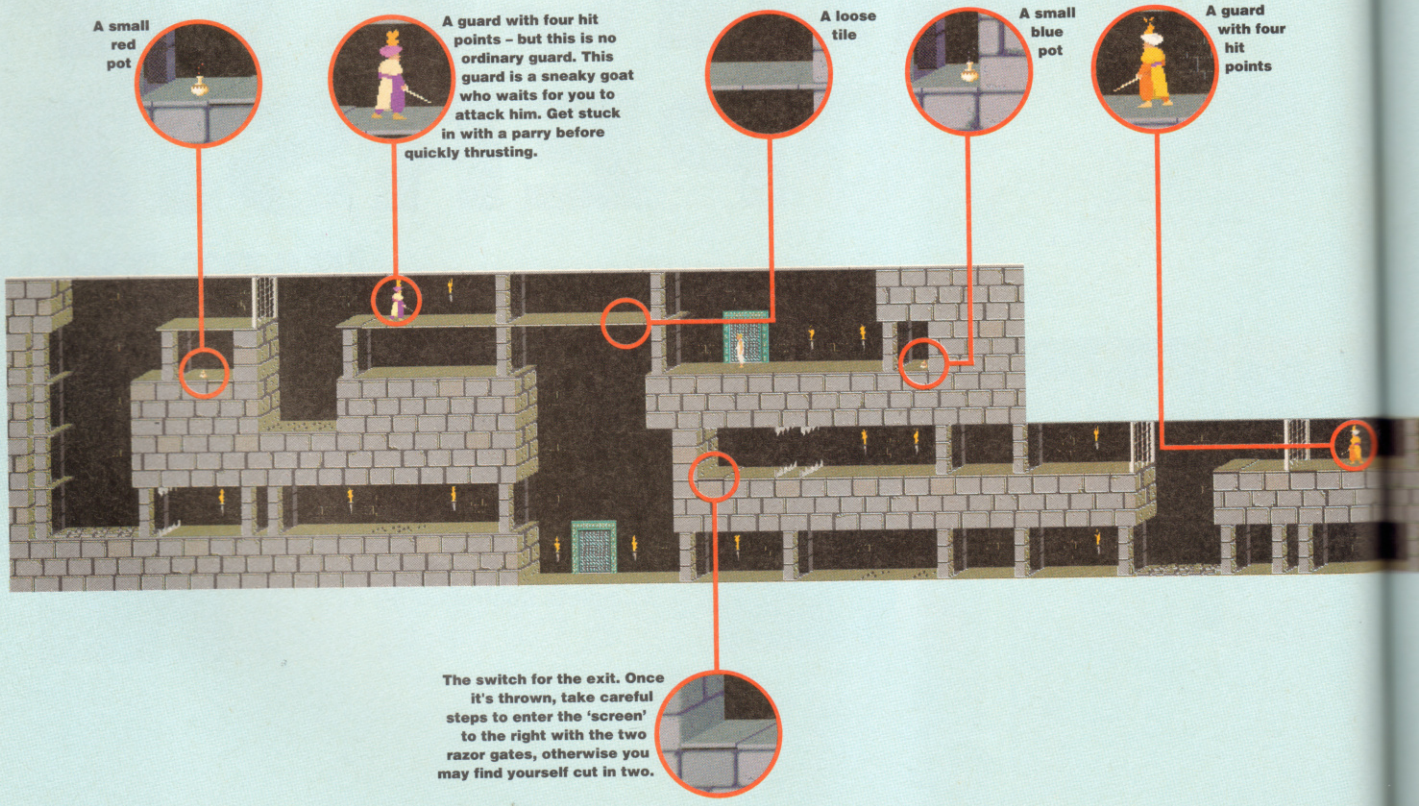
(PART TWO)



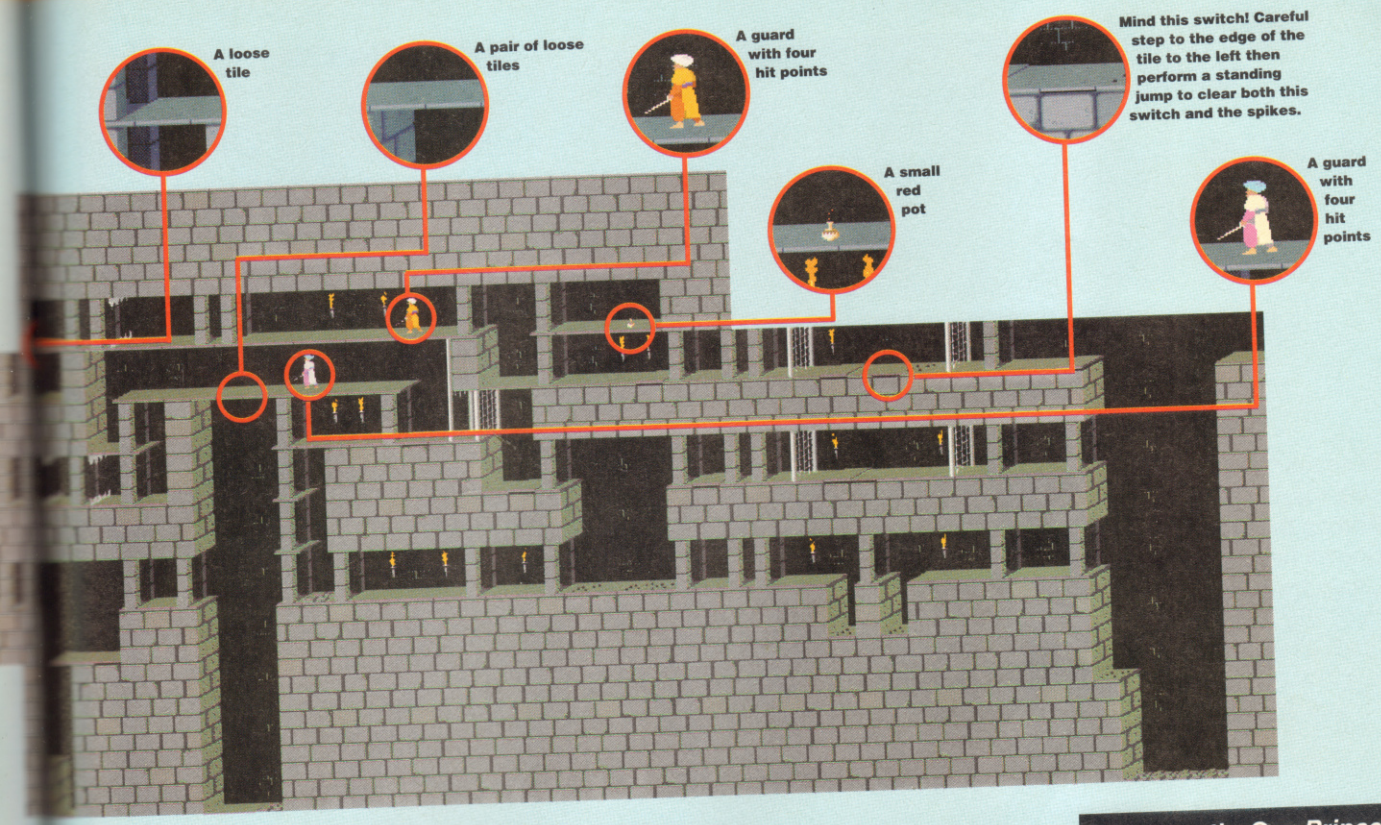
Here it is – part two of Gary Penn's luvverly guide to *Prince Of Persia*. Originally this was meant to have been done in two lumps, but, because of the sheer size and complexity of the game, you're now going to have to wait until *next* month for the final instalment. (Otherwise there wouldn't have been room for *Gods* etc this issue). Anyway, get ready for the guides to levels five to eight. If you don't know what's going on, check out last month's Complete Control for the key.

LEVEL SEVEN

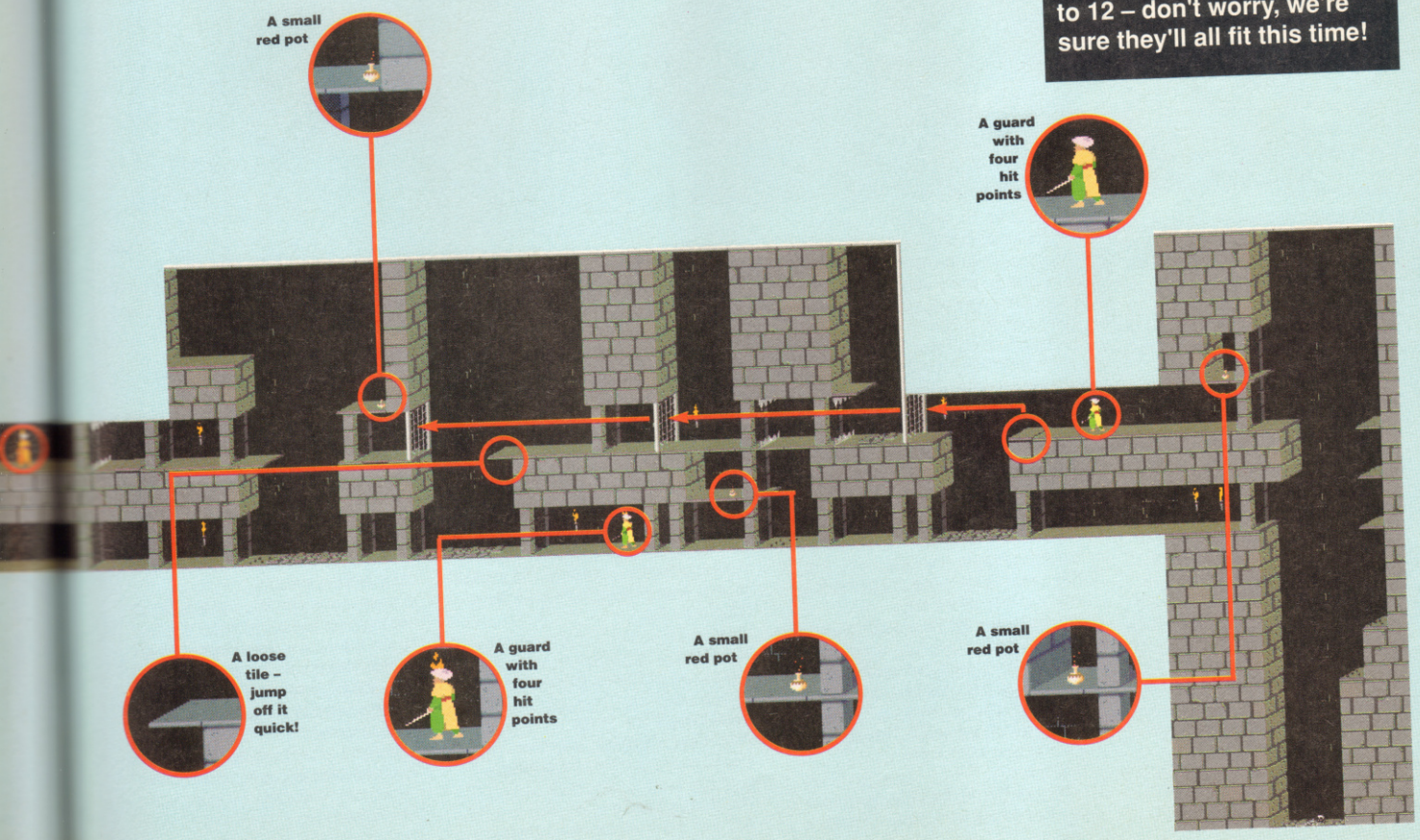




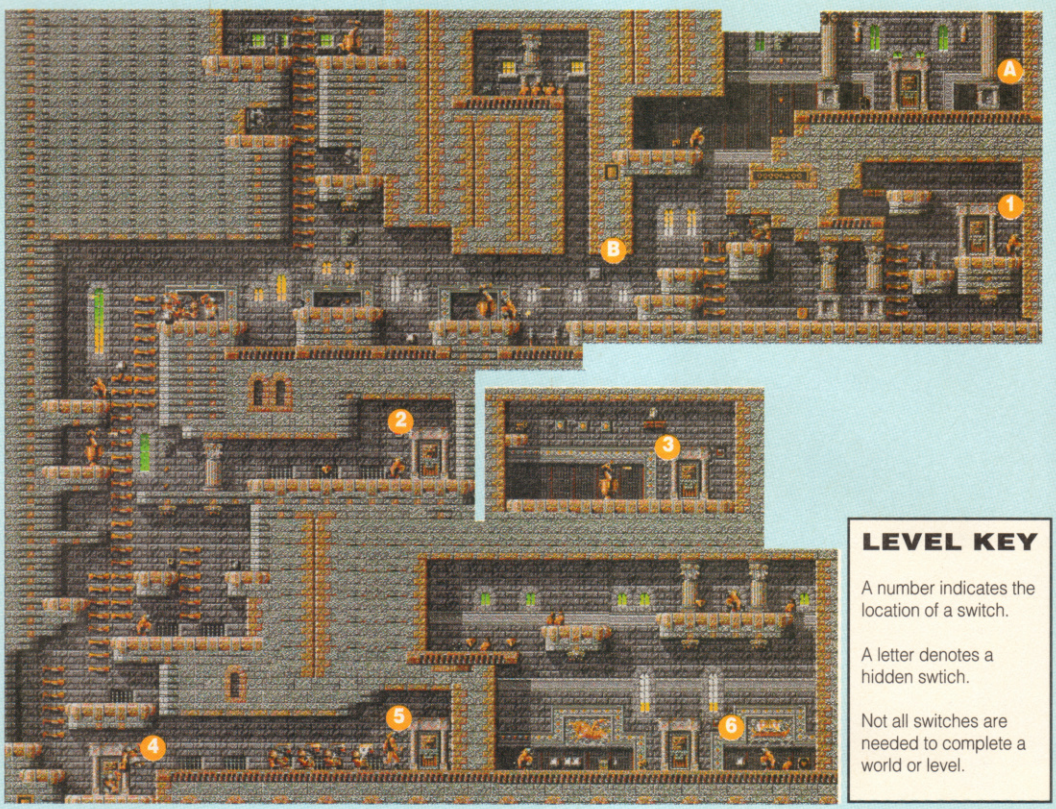
LEVEL EIGHT



Next month: Our *Prince Of Persia* guide comes to its conclusion, with levels nine to 12 – don't worry, we're sure they'll all fit this time!



WORLD ONE



In the second of our on-going playing guides, Bitmap Brother Eric Matthews (with a little help from our own Stuart Campbell) gives you the lowdown on LEVEL TWO of the smash hit *Gods*.

LEVEL KEY

A number indicates the location of a switch.

A letter denotes a hidden swtich.

Not all switches are needed to complete a world or level.

GODS

Level Two, World One
The world key to exit world one is located in the gem room. It is situated on top of a platform, some distance above ground level. The key is much too high to reach by normal means.

The block that the key rests on may be lowered by bringing three gems to this room. You must bring the gems in the correct order. Ice, fire then water.
When lowered, collect key and exit world one through the door by lever **(4)**.

Hidden Puzzles
1. To get to the treasure room.
When you first start level two, walk to the right and press hidden switch **(A)**. This will open a trap door below.
Walk left and kill the two centurions. If you have more than one life they will reveal a gold treasure chest key. Collecting this key will also trigger traps throughout this world.
Climb down into the chamber below the one you started in and walk right until a thief appears. Leave the thief to jump up and steal the shield potion sitting behind the traps on the platform above. Now use the gold key to lure him back down and kill him to get the shield. Climb up past the traps. Pull lever **(1)** to reveal a treasure key and a thief to collect it for you. Make sure your shield has run out before pulling the lever or it'll kill the thief. The treasure room is entered through the door to the right of lever **(5)**.
2. To enter the bonus room:
Experiment with lever **(3)**. Make sure you have enough energy before entering.

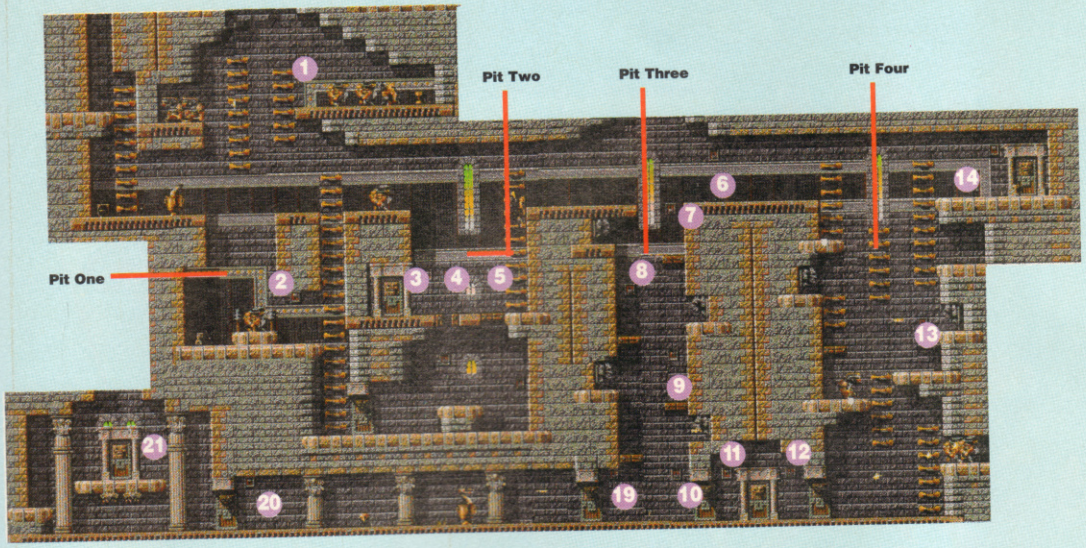
Level Two, World Two
The most direct route you can take through the pits goes like this:
Climb down the ladder to the platform where the narrow arc rests. It is usually better to ignore the narrow arc token if you already have a standard arc.
Walk to the right edge of the platform and jump onto the ladder to your right.
Jump onto the platform by lever **(1)**.
Press lever **(1)** to blow up the trap below.
Climb back down and land on the platform below.
Go down the ladder to the right. Get off at the first opening to the left. This is **Pit One**.
Blow up the traps by pulling lever **(2)**.
Get the room key.
Return to the ladder and climb back up to the top, exiting to your right.
Keep walking along this platform to the right and drop off the edge.
You are now in **Pit Two**. Walk right and up the ladder.
Walk right and jump over the gap.
Go right and down the next ladder and collect the teleport key.
Go to lever **(6)** and pull it. This closes the first trap door in **Pit Three**.
Drop down.
Pull levers **(7)**, **(8)** and **(9)** to close each new trap door in turn, allowing you to progress to the bottom of **Pit Three**.
Open the two side doors to your right and go through the door facing you between levers **(11)** & **(12)**. This will teleport you to the top of **Pit Four**.
Enter the door to the right of lever **(15)**, collect the world key from the ship room.
To exit the world, climb down to the bottom of pit three and open the left hand door. The world exit door is along the corridor to your left.

Hidden Puzzles
To get to the treasure room.
There are three chalices lying around the pits. Take them to the ship room to receive a treasure room key. The treasure room is entered through the door to the left of lever **(3)**.

The Shop
Buy spears and power potions.

Level Two, World Three
World three is split into two halves. The mosaic puzzle and the candle puzzle.

The Mosaic Puzzle
You start in the mosaic room. There are four pieces of mosaic which you must find and bring here.
Pick up the first piece from the right hand side of the room and walk left to replace the first piece of mosaic.
Pull lever **(1)**.
Kill the two centurions revealed and collect the trap key.
Reset lever **(1)** to reveal a moving block.
Jump onto the moving block and pick up the door key.
Pull lever **(2)** to reveal the hidden door.
Pull lever **(3)** to move **Block One**.
Reset lever **(2)** to open the door.
Along this corridor are four rooms. These are the crypt, the apothecary, the wizard's study and the armoury.
In these rooms are: The globe, the skull, and the jar of herbs.
To find the missing three pieces of the mosaic, take the skull to the crypt, take the globe to the wizard's study and take the jar of herbs to the apothecary. The quickest route is armoury, crypt, apothecary, wizard's study.
Return all three pieces of mosaic to the mosaic room and a teleport stone will then appear.



WORLD TWO

The teleport stone will take you to the second part of world three.

The Candle Puzzle
Walk left killing all monsters until a trap key is revealed.
Return to lever **(15)**. Pull lever **(15)** and moving **Block Two** will rise from the floor.
Jump onto the moving block and go up the ladder, then kill the wall monster to reveal a spear token.
Pick up the trap key and climb back down the ladder.
Walk left to lever **(17)** and pull it.
Climb down the ladder. Walk right. Jump over the trap and pull lever **(18)**. This closes the trap door underneath lever **(19)**. Climb back up and jump onto the trapdoor you'll find underneath lever **(19)**.
Use levers **(19)** and **(20)** to close trap doors and make your way up. Collect the trap key on the left.
Jump onto moving **Block Three** and ride it towards the right.
Jump up onto the ledge and retrieve the candle.
Go to lever **(22)** and pull it to move block **(4)** and climb down through the opening revealed.
Make your way to the study. The candle reveals the door key here.
Go to lever **(26)** and pull it to gain entrance to the dragon's lair.

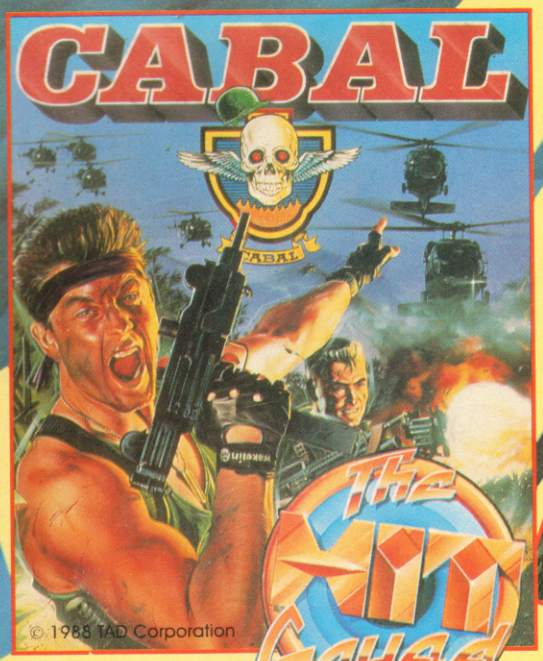
Hidden Puzzles
1. To get the gold cross.
Reset levers **(19)**, **(20)** and **(21)**. This will destroy the traps which prevent you from reaching the gold cross. The gold cross is very useful if taken to the right place.

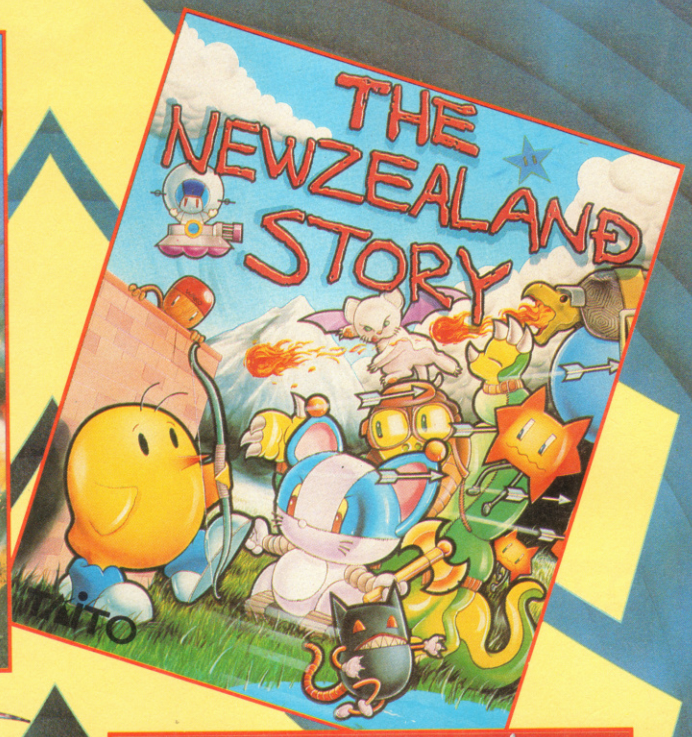
The Dragon
Alternately duck and shoot to kill the dragon. Don't force him too far over to the right or, when he dies, the treasure revealed will drop off the bottom of the screen and be lost.

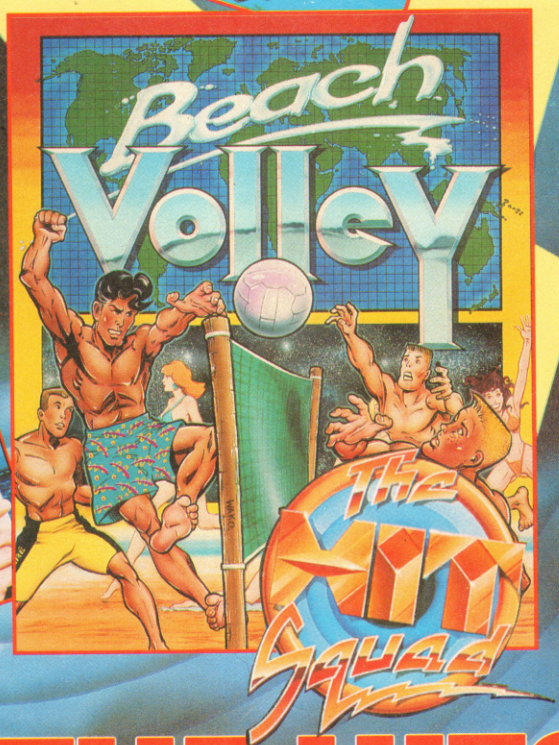
The Shop
During the first world of level three you will almost certainly have to pick up a mace which will cancel your spears. Sell the spears now by buying one throwing star. Spend you money on fireballs and save the rest to spend in the next shop.

COMING IN NEXT MONTH'S COMPLETE CONTROL (WITH A BIT OF LUCK): LEVEL THREE OF *GODS*.

TAKE ON THE SQUAD







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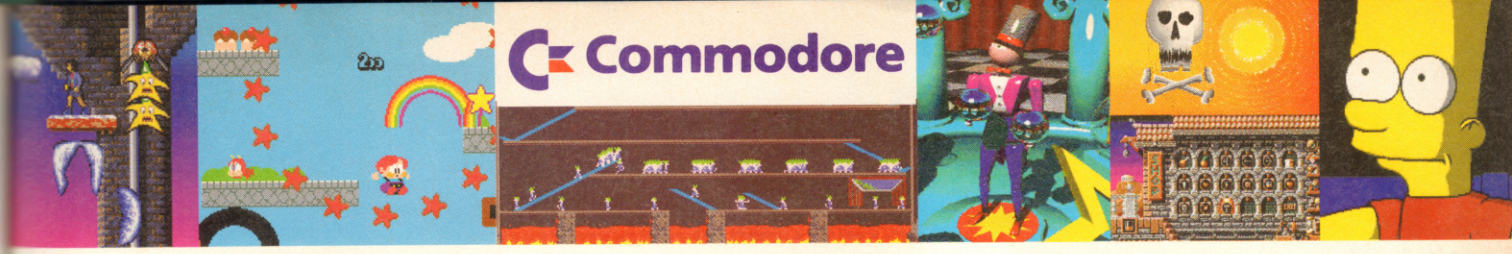

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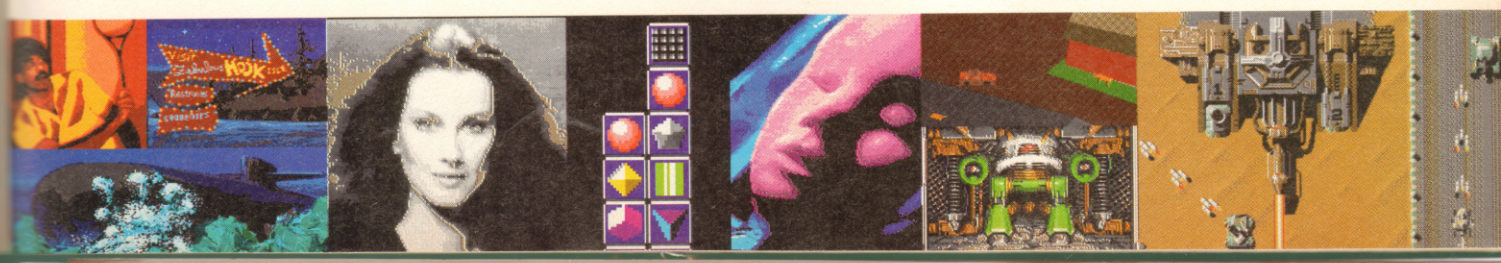

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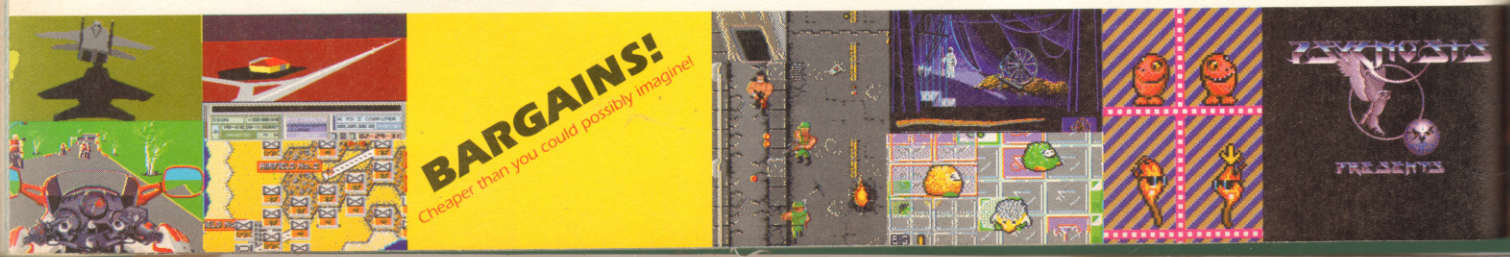

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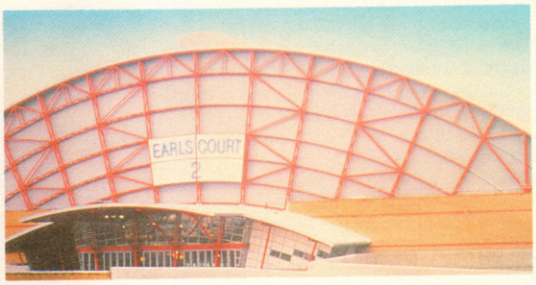

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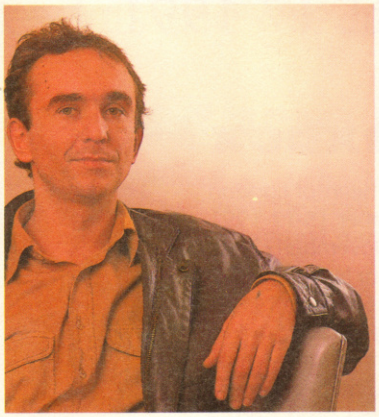
AMP9

***Populous II* is nearly completed, but it's going to be launched into a market absolutely flooded with epic-sized 3D isometric strategy games, many of which give the player a suspiciously similar god-like overview. Good though it's bound to be, will it be different enough to make much impact in the face of such stiff competition? Matt Bielby feels compelled to ask...**



Peter Molyneux, what have you started?

'I'm not all that happy that everyone keeps comparing all these games to Populous,' Peter Molyneux says. 'I've not played them all, but from the sound of things they all come at things from a very different angle. I'm not sure it's all that fair on the people who've written them really.'

It's not just us who are comparing them though, I protest. People are showing us these things, and the first thing they say is 'It may look a bit like *Populous* but it's really something else entirely,' and sometimes they're right and sometimes they aren't. All last year I felt a bit stupid bandying around the term 'god-sim' because all it really referred to was *Populous*, *Sim City*, *Powermonger* and precious little else, but now I've no problem with it at all. We've got things that could broadly be defined as god-sims coming out of our ears, and most of them look a lot closer to *Populous* than they do to *Sim City*.

'Alright then, let me change my tack a little,' says Peter. 'Yes, you're right, there are a lot of these games about, and yes, they're quite worrying. Every so often I have a crisis where I wonder if we're doing the right thing, if *Populous II* is really going to work and whether I'm too close to it to see something obvious that's terribly wrong with it. Wouldn't it be horrible if one of these other games turned out to be a great deal better than our one?'

Horrible maybe, but not very likely though. *Populous II* is just so big, so polished and so complete feeling you'd be hard pushed to see how anyone could directly compete. Instead, most of these makers of rival *Populous* games have taken a different angle on the thing, coming up with an assortment of similar looking games which actually have different flavours.

From the look of things, *Populous II* stands head and shoulders above them all in terms of ambition at the very least, but that's not to say these aren't some superb games in their own right. Indeed, there's nothing to say that one of the approaches taken here may not work out to be more satisfying to actually play than Bullfrog's 'official' sequel. Mind you, most of the new breeds programmers are claiming to have little or nothing to do with Peter's original...

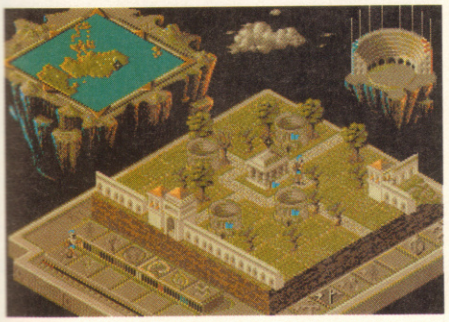
POPULOUS II Electronic Arts

Available October

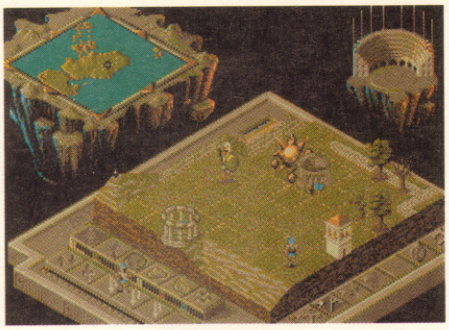
At first glance, *Populous II* looks pretty similar to the first game. Things don't immediately strike you as having changed all that much – not until you put the two games side by side at least. It's only then you notice the book effect is gone, and all the backgrounds are simplified – the plain black void everything floats in not only concentrates the mind better on the task in hand, it somehow gives the feeling of god-like power over landscapes floating in a void. The idea is to make room for more happening in the play area itself.

'Much as I like it – and it's genuinely one of my favourite ever games – I felt the first *Populous* was lacking in nearly every area,' says Peter Molyneux. 'My first priority wasn't to change the game graphically too much, it was to improve the way it played. Part of that's to add much more in the way of effects so the game simply looks more action-packed and interesting, part of it's to improve the controls to make them as intuitive as possible, and part of it's to add to the number of ways in which you can play the game. I've always hated games where once you've completed it, that's it – you've finished – and there's no incentive to start again. With *Populous II* – and all the best games we've done – you can play it in a number of different ways, and there's no finite end in sight. That's the advantage'

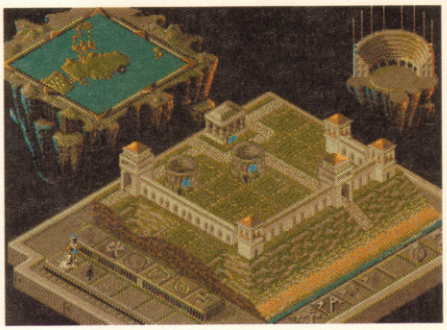
The bigger, better, wider, more approach



A prosperous settlement on the north west tip of the island. You can just tell something's about to happen.



The sparse backgrounds of *Populous II* give a real feeling of God-like control.



Note the new 'island' floating at the top right of the screen, and the simplified icon control system.

'The whole point of *Populous* is that you CAN'T control what your people do, you can only influence them – that's where it differs from many similar looking games which in fact give you a more traditional strategy game-like control. I love the idea that you can walk away from a game and everyone will keep on doing things without you – when you come back the whole set-up will have changed and you'll have to try and cope with how things stand now.'

Populous II is certainly a more spectacular game than the first one – your basic control is still that you can raise and lower land around your people, encouraging them to settle in flat open spaces, say, or protecting them from a tidal wave by quickly building a range of mountains between them and it. Beyond that though, there are about 40 new graphical effects you can employ – from whirlpools to earthquakes to simply planting trees. As a trainee Greek god you start with only a few in your repertoire, but as your worshippers increase in number so does your ability to do things – and hopefully your skill too. Would you know that building high land nearby will attract a column of fire away from your settlement, say? And would you know to use fire yourself as a way of drying out a swamp that threatens to drown your men?

'One of the most important things about the new game is that you can play it in four different ways. The Conquest game is a sort of role-player, where you're trying to build up your men and abilities with the sole purpose of taking over the entire map – and that means attacking and defeating the rival tribe of men loyal to a rival, computer-controlled deity. With the Challenge game you chose one of around 100 pre-set cities and then have to save it from disaster. The game will give you a certain amount of time to prepare for the tidal wave or earthquake or whatever it is to hit, and you've got to do the best job preparing for it you can.

'Then there's the Problem game, which gives you a pre-set task – say persuading your tribe to peacefully co-habit a map with the tribe of another deity – and then gives you a certain amount to time in which to manage it, while the Custom game allows you to set up the conditions and scenario pretty much any way you like.'

And that's not all! *Populous II* will feature a serial link (which allows two players to join their machines and play rival gods), a normal two player game (which allows rival human player to use the same machine, each using a cut-down version of the screen), a rewind facility (which allows you to rewind or fast forward through the last three hours of events, allowing you to spotlight exactly where you may have gone wrong), and (one of our favourites) the option to set up two computer opponents against each other and let them get on with it, allowing you to come back to the computer every so often, see how they're doing, and perhaps make a few malicious modifications.

MEGA LO MANIA Image Works

Out now

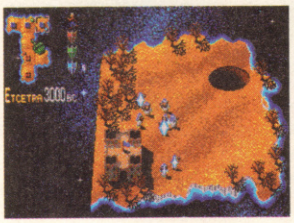
Mega lo Mania (reviewed this issue) looks very similar to *Populous* but has quite a different feel. The presentation is much less ambitious for a start – you can't raise or lower land, just flip from one sector to another – and the game task is much more obviously wargame based. Here you're not so much manipulating the destinies of your little computer people, you're leading them.

The control is that much more direct – the game has probably less depth, but it's much more easily accessible. It's also very funny – the digitised voices (especially recorded by real actors, not the normal samples or crap programmer-speak) particularly drawing you into the game. But you can read all this and more in the review on page 22 – what you really want to know is the thinking behind the game, how this is intended to be different to *Populous*. And who better to tell us than John Hare of Sensible Software?

'Just listen to this – our original design for the game that became *Mega lo Mania* – and tell me how close to *Populous* it sounds! We had a space ship moving across a scrolling map and shooting out enemy control towers with bombs. When you'd done that the land would turn to your colour and you'd have conquered the sector – you'd then move onto the next one. Rather than have the normal shoot-'em-up collectable weapons we had a factory where you would actually build them from material you collected – indeed, the management aspect was as complex as it is now, but we had a shoot-'em-up tacked on top! 'What basically happened is that the publishers said it was too complicated having the two sorts of game in there, and since we'd got more interested in the management side the blaster had to go. With that out of the way, making it scroll seemed sort of redundant, so we changed it so you were controlling a race of alien animals living on a static piece of land. Later we moved to robots, which is where the sort of strange mechanical way they reproduce in the finished game comes from, while the collecting minerals to create things is a fairly obvious idea used in a lot of games – *Millennium 2.2* is one that definitely springs to mind.

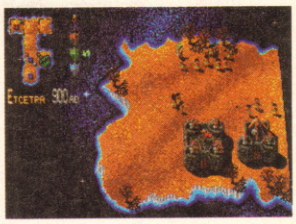
'And then – and this is where we were influenced by *Populous* – the robots became little people to humanise proceedings. It developed logically from there really'.

The lighthearted approach



Perhaps the most visually distinctive of the new god sims, *Mega lo Mania* avoids the use of isometric 3D.

One minute it's swords and spears, the next it can be jet planes and nuclear missiles.



By opting for a direct control system, *Mega lo Mania* transcends the 'cold' feel of some strategy games.

REALMS Virgin

Available October

Realms is being developed by Graftgold, makers of the Amiga version of *Rainbow Islands* (well known for being our favourite game of all time), so we expect a lot. This one has much more of the straight strategy game about it than most others covered on these pages – as heir to the throne of a certain 'realm', you inherit a certain number of cities. One, your capital, is paid taxes by the others, and so becomes strong (though again, you've got to watch you don't overtax your satellite towns – there are up to four or five other computer controlled realms on the same map, and they're likely to take advantage of any disgruntled cities). There's also the possibility that a town or towns will split off and form a new realm of its own.

Steve Turner of Graftgold apparently had the idea absolutely ages ago: 'It was back in the Spectrum days, when *Lords Of Midnight* was popular. It's an idea that went through all sorts of forms, but what we've ended up with gives you first a massive map-view showing the strategic links between towns, and then a closer, more *Powermonger*-style battle view. This is more of a fast and frantic strategy game than *Powermonger* though, and on a more global scale. We're not concerned with the abilities of individuals at all – each time you see a little man on the screen he represents an army of 1,000 men.

'Since we've been working on the game such a long time, the timing is turning out to be annoying – there

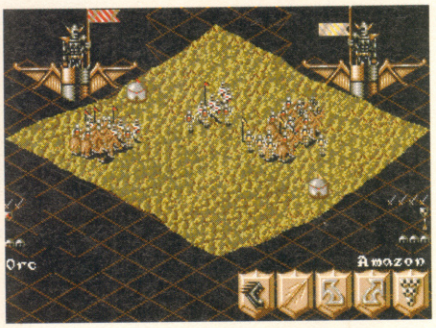
The super-strategy game approach

seems to have been a run on this sort of game, following the American style of PC strategy games, but using European front-end graphics. Many PC games sound great but turn out to be very disappointing to play – the idea here is to get that scale, but make it all lots of fun at the same time.

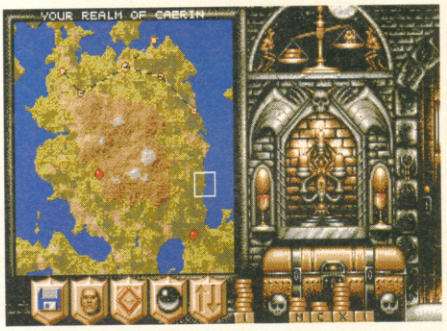
'The other thing we've aimed at – while not fixing ourselves to any particular place or time – is making our world feel like a real place, and making events unfold as they really would. It's not as contrived as, say, *Mega lo Mania*, which, while it works as a game, doesn't really represent the way things happen in real life – having said that though, we do have races of dwarves and elves in our game which takes it out of the area of reality!

'The idea is that sometimes you will feel like you're in control of the game, earning more revenue and spreading your sphere of influence, and sometimes you feel it's driving you, as everything goes wrong at once and you have to take desperate measures to try and arrest the decline. We imagine you'll be frantically clicking away on screen and icons, moving yourself around, checking that while you're fighting one enemy on your northern front, say, a plague isn't ravaging your capital city and so on. I'm not exactly sure how really serious wargamers will take to it – there probably aren't enough statistics in it for them – but I think if they try playing it they'll find it represents a battle in the most direct way, while using the same real world rules as all those boring battle games.'

The contoured 3D map, while small is incredibly effective, the curves and details of land being remarkably clear.



A confrontation *Realms*-style. Each warrior graphic actually represents a horde of the little blighters.



More strategy-based than the other games previewed here, *Realms* could represent the future of wargames.

FLAG Gremlin

Available November

Flag looks a bit like the rest of these large scale 3D isometric things, and provides a very similar sounding game task, but in reality it's probably the odd man out there. The first real difference is the scale – you're much closer to the action in *Flag* (indeed, the view is more that of a *Cadaver* than a *Populous*), and while the game-play

The paintball approach

is based on a conflict between two tribes, the most people you'll ever really have on each side is around the 60 mark. The second difference is that this isn't so much an all-out war as a stealthy commando-type operation – your task, as leader of one of the tribes, is to steal the other side's flag and get it back to your base, NOT to simply kill everyone in sight. Yes, you're right, despite the medieval trappings, this is basically a paintball game.

The blue standard bearer mopes inconspicuously in the corner while his buddies go in search of the enemy flag.

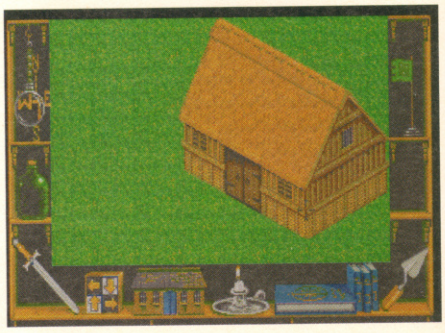
'We actually have the choice between playing the game in the prettier 3D view or a 2D looking-straight-down-on-the-map view,' says programmer Simon Cooke. 'In the 2D view the scale is a lot smaller so you can get a better idea of what's happening overall – when you start out you'll probably use that most, but I'd recommend switching between the two during the same game.'

In two player mode the game gives each player 30 seconds or a minute to take their turn, and then the little men fight it out from where they stand using their in-built artificial intelligence.

'Our plan is to make it as idiot proof as possible,' says Simon, 'so we're trying to get rid of icons and other confusing controls as much as possible, making the game easier to use. I've been getting very paranoid that people are going to lump this in with *Populous*, but once they see the game I think they'll be immediately aware of how different it is. We're making no attempt to simulate the world here – I know the fact that we say it's a conflict between two towns that extends through the ages sounds like that, but in fact all that really changes is the architecture and the clothing. The time period is from the medieval to the Elizabethan, so the technology level remains more or less the same. It's no *Mega lo Mania* or whatever – this is much smaller scale, short-term strategy, thing. Much more an action game.'

Indeed, if *Populous* puts you in the role of a god, and *Powermonger* the role of a general, *Flag* is perhaps best imagined simulating what it's like being a sergeant in a combat situation. It makes you itch to know what Simon Cooke's collaborator on Flag – Ian Harling – could have done with his Vietnam game *The Lost Patrol* using a similar system...

With *Flag* you are placed very much in the middle of the action. There's no giant world to conquer here.



With graphics reminiscent of Ultimate's old Spectrum games, the tone of Flag is very much one of fun.

UTOPIA Gremlin

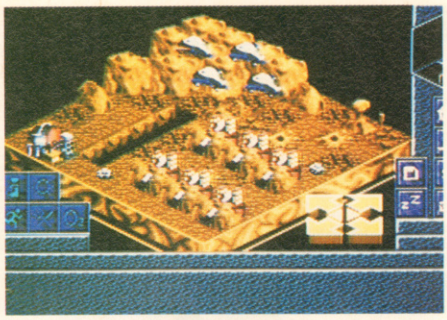
Available October

Gremlin's *Utopia* is set on another planet at some time in the future – hence all the pink ground, *Dan Dare* style architecture and so on – and while it shares the diamond-shape isometric viewpoint of Populous, the game itself actually has a lot more in common with the other classic 'god-sim', *Sim City*.

'Yes,' says programmer Graham Ing, the man behind *BSS Jane Seymour*, 'we actually like to think of it as a sort of *Sim City* Plus. The idea for the game came initially from playing *Sim City*, and enjoying it, but thinking it would be that much better if you had some sort of big enemy to go up against. What started out as a sort of Cold War thing quickly became futuristic when we thought of how much freedom that would give us, and the top-down view we started out with didn't last long either – I don't think the market would accept the straight map-view anymore. Doing everything from a 3D isometric viewpoint certainly makes it look a lot more impressive.'

What happens is that you start out, in your role as leader of a space colony, with a small outpost on an alien planet – about 100 people, eight buildings and that's about it. It's your job to mine resources, build up industries and make your settlement grow – since the air isn't breathable here though you're in a much more precarious position than in *Sim City*, with keeping essential supplies coming being your first priority. The map you get to scroll around is maybe ten screen by twelve screens across – in theory it's possible to fill the whole lot with your metropolis, though in practice the best the programmers have managed covers about a third.

The futuristic theme to *Utopia* makes for some interesting graphics. Just check out these building designs.



The sci-fi approach to the god sim concept is *Utopia*'s winning card, lending the game a less pretentious feel.

The modular city designs takes away some of the realism, but leaves the game simple to grasp, much like *Sim City*.

The isometric Sim City approach

Where *Utopia* really differs from *Sim City* though is in the war element – it's not unlike that of *Mega lo Mania* in fact. Somewhere off the edge of the screen is an alien settlement – of different types with different capabilities on different levels – and sooner or later they're going to attack you. It's up to you then to build up your defenses in preparation for this happening – putting some men aside to develop weapons is a good idea – and then organise your people to strike back as need be.

A minor civilisation in full swing, the similarities with Sim City become more apparent.

CASTLES Electronic Arts

Available early '92

Already a big(ish) PC hit, *Castles* will be ready on the Amiga in November or December, all being well. Little has been seen on that version in this country so far – which is why these are PC screens you see here – as it's being put together by Interplay, the well-known American developers of *The Bard's Tale* series, *Neuromancer*, *Wasteland* and *Battle Chess*.

So how does it all work? Well, imagine a cross between *Populous*, *Railroad Tycoon* and the Atari arcade game *Ramparts* (itself being developed for the Amiga by Domark). You play the lord of a castle – or a number of castles on more sophisticated levels – and the aim of the game is to a) complete your castle (the design is up to you), b) build up your armies, and c) defend against or attack rival lords. It's not all straight fighting though – *Castles* includes a lot of that keeping-people-sweet business that's become a staple of this sort of game, though don't be too soft on them! A lightly taxed people may be a happy people, but they're also a badly defended one, and that means you'll be put out of the game pretty damn smartish – also, it's worth remembering that keeping the church and your armies sweet was at least as important to the average medieval tyrant as the general well-being of the peasants.

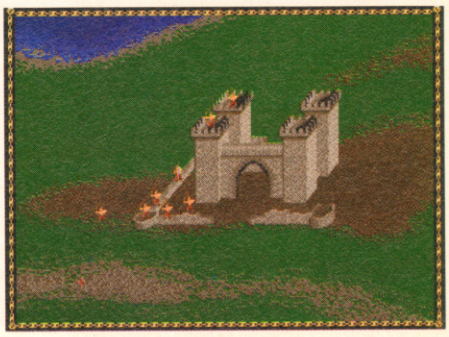
Castles has been criticised on the PC for being a bit too samey, with less of the grand scale and variation of events you get in games like *Populous*, though apparently steps have been taken to rectify some of that with the Amiga. Just how effective these improvements will be remains to be seen.

'I think it's fair to say that there are a number of games around at the moment that've been influenced by that whole *Populous/ Sim City* thing,' says EA's Simon Jeffrey, 'and this is one of them. It is odd though how things seem to come in trends, often without anybody involved being at least consciously aware of it. *Castles* has been included in with all the large-scale 3D isometric games, but equally it's been caught up in a sort of medieval castle-based game thing. There's Atari's *Ramparts* arcade machine for a start, which is much more of a puzzle game – almost a cross between *Castles* and *Tetris* – and then there's a game from Mindcraft called *The Siege* due early next year which has a similar theme. Mindcraft games tend to be much more hardcore role-playing orientated though, so I see little real conflict, but it's odd how these things come about, isn't it?'

The medieval approach

Sometimes *Castles* feels less like a god sim and more like a construction company simulation. (PC screens shown)

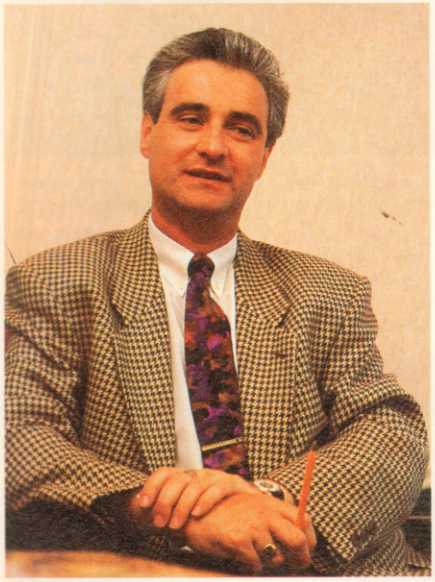
Statistics in abundance, the PC version of *Castles* has been criticised for it's lack of scope and feel.



The castle only part complete, it's time to get the archers ready in preparation of the enemy assault.

ALL THIS AND LOTUS II

work IN PROGRESS



Ian Stewart: Gremlin boss and all-round chuffed person.

It's a hive of activity at Gremlin all right. It's been two years now since Ian Stewart bought a slightly sorry looking and rather run-down little company back from US Gold, and you really wouldn't recognise the place. Not surprising actually, since they've moved – offices held at various times in Walsall, Birmingham and Derby abandoned in favour of a warren of tiny rooms in the middle of home town Sheffield. Physically at least, the company's back where it started around seven years ago.

Of course, in every other way it's a very different firm. The impressive thing isn't just that it's now a proper company again, though there is that (Gremlin's no longer just a handful of blokes using the resources of Centresoft/US Gold to see them through) – it's that the products have been there too. You couldn't really say they've had a duffer since, well, *Impossamole* – certainly the *Switchblade*, *Supercars* and *Lotus* triumvirate, all three of which have spawned successful (or soon to be successful) sequels, has worked miracles for the company. 'There are people who remember Gremlin from before we became known as the driving game people,' says boss Ian Stewart, and he looks all set to remind us all of the fact too – this is quite simply one of the most interesting Christmas product line-ups they've ever had...

LOTUS TURBO CHALLENGE II

Lotus II – notice the missing word 'Esprit', due to the fact that there are Elan-based sections in this new game – is being put together by Sean Southern and Andrew Morris at Magnetic Fields, the team behind the first game. Sean, in particular, has one hell of a background in driving games – both *Supercars*, *Super Scramble Sim*, *Kick Start* et al – and it shows. There are things being tried in this new Lotus that just haven't been seen in other Amiga car racing games.

The first difference to take on board over the original Lotus is that this new one isn't based around race tracks – instead, it's that old favourite, the *OutRun*-style chase across America. There are eight stages, 40 time checkpoints to cross, and various backgrounds ranging from desert to swamp to forest. In play the immediate difference over the first game is that you get lots of different coloured cars (rather than millions of red ones) and that the full screen is employed in single player mode (the unusual horizontally split affair is retained when you're racing a chum). More spectacular, though, are the new weather conditions. Here you can see snow, rain and the quite spectacular fog sequences – where cars, trees and sign posts loom up out of a vision-limiting greyness – but the finished night driving sequence is said to be spectacular too, with objects again only becoming visible as you get close to them. It's fast too – perhaps even faster than the first Lotus

***Lotus II*: Seen in these four screens in single player mode (the two-player uses a split screen à la the first *Lotus*) it's already obvious that it's a far more impressive game than its predecessor. Ther.e are still a lot of graphical glitches in the desert section (bottom left) but check out the snow and (especially) the fog scenes on the right – nothing has been done like this on the Amiga before. There's life in the sprite-based driving game yet...**

game – but it's the weather conditions that will win people over.

Andrew Morris is graphic artist on the project: 'One thing we were certain we wanted to get in was the full screen display in one player mode – it's something we were trying for with the first Lotus but didn't quite have time to get right, so this proved the ideal opportunity for us.

'The thing everybody comments on is the fog effect and yes, we're very pleased with it. I've seen people do fog on a couple of things, but I don't think anybody's got anywhere near ours. Other things we're pleased with too include the fact you can link two Amigas to get four players racing at once – each using a half screen display – and the fact that having the races come in stages with check points makes them more exciting.

'I think this is it for us as far as racing games are concerned though – for the moment at least. I know Sean (Southern, the programmer) wants to have a go at a shoot-'em-up next, and hopefully we'll be able to make a good job of that too. The thing is to look at existing genres of game and then hopefully find a new way to do it that nobody's done before.'

HARLEQUIN

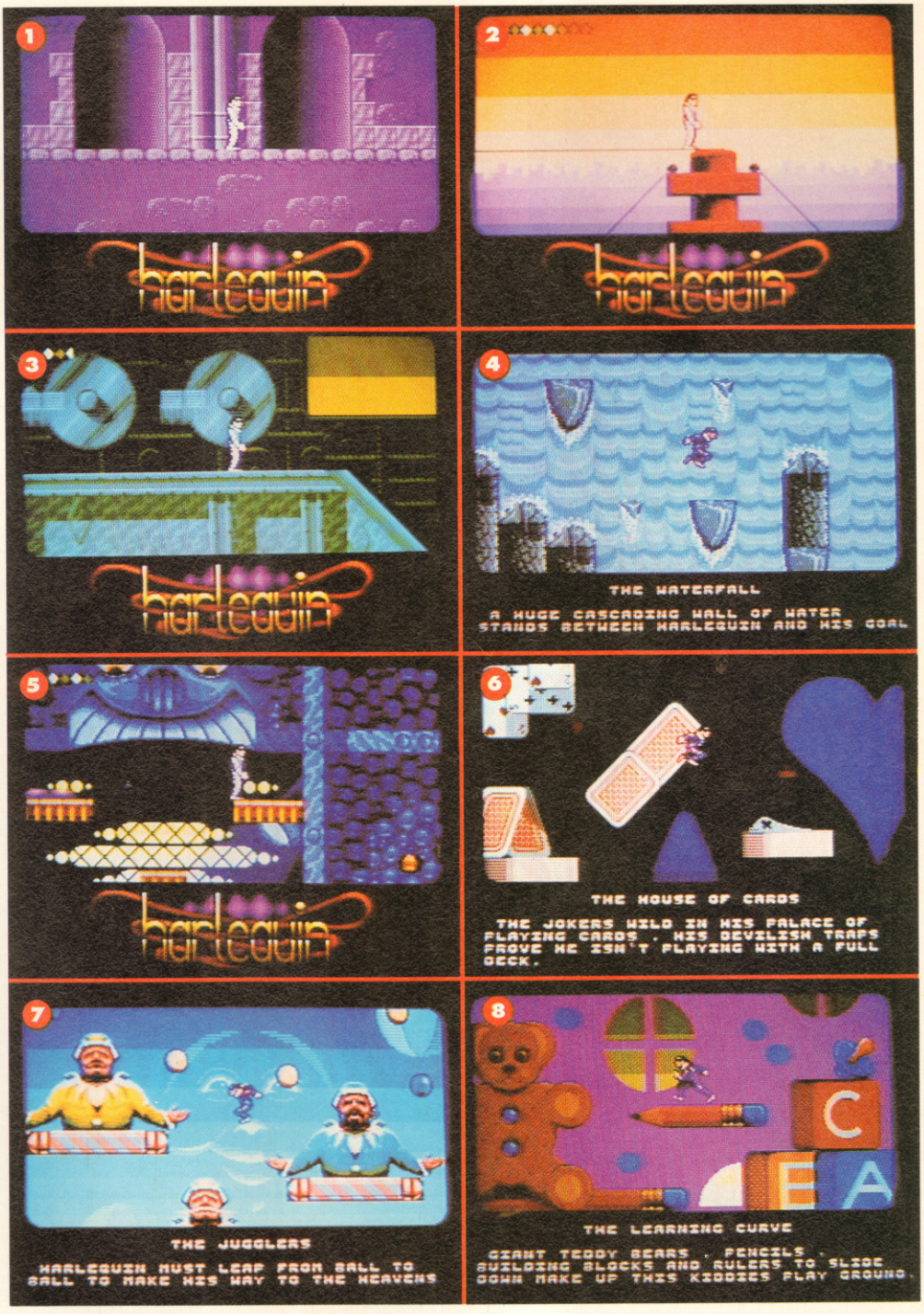
Play *Harlequin* and you're immediately reminded of something. It's the way the main character leaps, slides and bounds across the roof tops, the way the baddies all seem so static by comparison – hell, even the way he hang-glides in at the start of things! That's right, on first appearances *Harlequin* – a coin-op style leap-around featuring more than its fair share of moving platforms and the like – seems heavily influenced by, of all things, *Strider*. It's an eight way scroller – unusually, the main character walks right to left much of the time – built up of a fairly generous 20 levels. At one point they were apparently not sure whether the main character should be armed, or simply use his agility to dodge the baddies, though as things stand now weapons are certainly in the game plan.

Harlequin is being put together by Andrew Findlay and Ed Campbell of The Warp Factory, newcomers who've previously only worked on the unreleased beat-'em-up *Battlebound* for On-line.

So, Andrew, it looks to me a lot like *Strider*.

'Well, yeah, perhaps some of the bits you've seen, but we really haven't looked at *Strider* very much at all – I think that'll become clear as you see more of the game. What we've been aiming at is simply getting a smooth scrolling platform game on a grand scale – we've tried to have lots of interaction with the backgrounds and use as much imagination as possible. At one point our hero hangs off the arms of a giant clock, in another he has to avoid being eaten up by giant faces who are trying to suck you up through a straw!

'What we didn't want was one of those games where you just follow a linear path through the levels and once you've completed the game, that's it. Maximum →



***Harlequin*: It doesn't remain this purple – or this static – for long!(1) At the top of this tower there's a giant clock – Harlequin has to hang from it like Robert Powell in 'The Thirty Nine Steps'. In fact our hero uses lots of circus-type skills – wire-walking (2) amongst them. It's when he's sliding down the angled wires (or indeed angled rooftops or other walls (4)) that the game becomes most reminicent of arcade and US Gold home computer semi-classic *Strider*. Harlequin is at least as acrobatic as that character, but lives in perhaps a more interesting world – the waterfall scenes (4) could come from *Switchblade II* or either *Turrican* game or goodness knows what else. You couldn't say the same about some of the other places he goes though – *Harlequin* has a bizarre, dream-like quality to it, especially graphically, quite unlike just about any other game. Some of it is simply hard to work out – we'll have to wait until we play the game to really find out what's going on in this circus-like location (5), while others are more identifiable, if just plain bizarre. The House Of Cards (6) provides a number of weird platforms built from, well, playing cards, giving the game a surreal edge similar to Batman comics, *The Avengers* TV show (or just about anything else that has giant playing cards in it). Even weirder than that though is the bit with the giant jugglers – 'Harlequin must leap from ball to ball to make his way to the heavens' apparently – (7) while The Learning Curve (ahem) – looking like it was 'filmed' on the over-sized set of a manic Play School – puts him in a giant kiddies bedroom, complete with sad-looking (and hopefully non-hostile) giant teddy bear (8). There are no two ways about it – *Harlequin* is one interesting-looking, but very peculiar, game.**

***Videokid*: You want giant end-of-level baddies? Hey, you got 'em!**

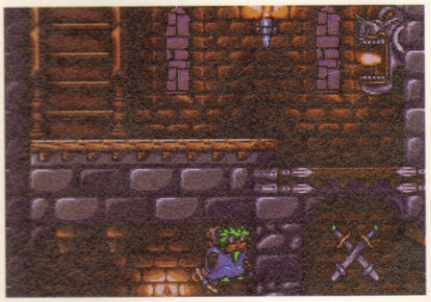
playability is what we've aimed at, and to try and get that we've allowed you to take many different routes through the game. At one point, for instance, you're in a room full of TVs – depending on which one you pick, the next levels will be based on the theme of whatever programme was playing at the time.'

Ed, you came up with the bulk of the game design, didn't you?

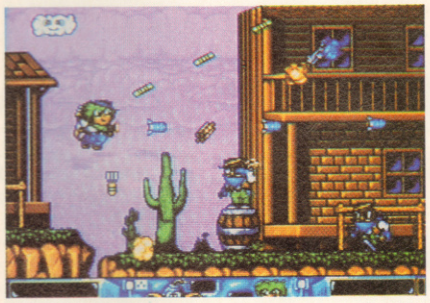
'Yes. First we thought of lots of ideas for levels really, and then we tried to think of ways to string them all together. What we've ended up with is a game with a very dream-like, slightly surreal atmosphere where just about anything can happen. For instance, in one bit the harlequin turns into a fish and you find yourself swimming through the sewer pipes for a bit!'

If you had to name one game that's been an influence, what would it be?

'Well, I don't think there are any that have really influenced us, but one we like the feel of is *Switchblade II* – it's really big and has a nice feeling of freedom of movement about it. That's what we 0 go for.'



***Videokid*: The first level is set in this horror-film style castle affair.**



***Videokid*: Notice how our hero doesn't really walk as such – he flies around.**

VIDEOKID

The concept behind this is simple, though apparently added at quite a late stage to what was a fairly ordinary cutesy platform shoot-'em-up thing. Put together by Stuart Cook and Peter Tattersall of Twilight in Harrogate (the people working on Ocean's *WWF Wrestling* and US Gold's *Mega-Twins*), it puts you in the stumpy shoes of a character who lives his life through – or, rather, in – videos. Hence an excuse for medieval castles, '30's Chicago and the like as backdrops. The basic thinking behind it is that if something appears in vids then it's fair game – though you're obviously not going to get any recognisable copyrighted characters (say Freddie from the *Nightmare On Elm Street* films, or Jean Claude Van Damme) cropping up, and neither is there going to be anything remotely saucy.

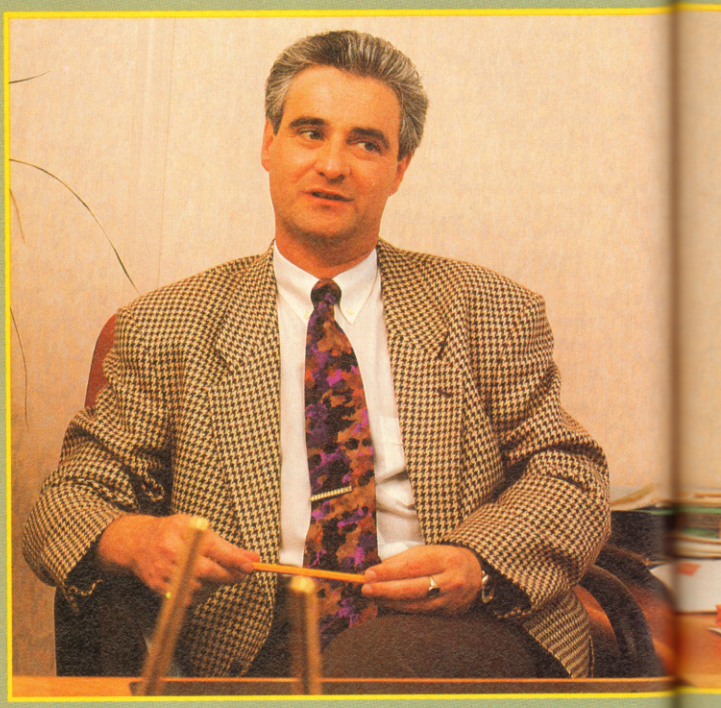
***Videokid*: In fact, you couldn't tell it here, but it's more blaster than platform game.**

'In actual fact,' says Stuart Cook, 'this is really a shoot-'em-up masquerading as a platform game. What happens is that this fairly average kid, who just happens to watch an awful lot of TV, one day gets dragged into a new – and slightly unusual, to say the least! –

***Videokid*: Having said that, some bits are decidedly *Wonderboy*-ish.**

work IN PROGRESS

MR GREMLIN



Ian Stewart, boss of Gremlin, relaxing in his Sheffield offices. You can't see it here, but this is perhaps the biggest room in the building – Gremlin's long, thin offices contain a string of tiny self-contained work areas, each the size of a small bedroom.

In many ways Ian Stewart still looks fairly young, but the hair's the giveaway – the sort of silvery grey the head of the family always sports in US mini-series. Perhaps it's the worry and struggle involved in turning the company around – 'These last two years have been the hardest for sure,' he says, 'but they've also been the most enjoyable' – or perhaps it's merely in keeping with his status as a senior industry-type figure. After all, he's been around quite some time...

Were you always sure you could pull Gremlin back towards being a major player again?

'Of course. I put an awful lot of money into it and a lot on the line, so I had to be convinced it would work, didn't I? It's belief in your own ability at the end of the day, and belief in the people around you or who you can attract to work for you that counts.'

How do you feel people view Gremlin now?

'Well, the perception that's getting back to us is that this is a company that people are really watching, or at least, should be watching. Obviously we can't get complacent, and we don't have vast amounts of corporate money to bail us out if we make mistakes, but I think we can afford to be cautiously pleased.'

Do you see big changes in the market over the next few years?

'The Amiga market is obviously very important to us at the moment, and I'm sure it will remain so. It has to be really – in the UK it's the only one we've got! – though it has to be said the PC is coming through a bit in Europe. What's happening is that we're filtering out the bottom end – the Spectrums and so on. The other thing that's become crystal clear is we simply have to become heavily involved in the console market by next year.'

WHERE DID THE IDEA FOR PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE COME FROM? AND WHAT DOES 'GBH' STAND FOR ANYWAY? IAN STEWART ANSWERS THESE QUESTIONS AND MORE...

Gremlin have recently acquired a number of unusual licences – *Lotus*, *Hero Quest*, the recently announced *Plan 9 From Outer Space*. How is this working out?

'Very well indeed, and they're certainly a lot of fun to be involved with. David Martin (who used to run Martech/Screen 7) handles most of our licence acquisition. He sources them, comes up with proposals and so on – I'd say probably 80 percent of things we put proposals in for don't come off for one reason or another, but the ones that have are proving interesting'.

How do you come up with the idea for something like *Plan 9 From Outer Space*?

'Sean Kelly, one of our product development people and an ex-journalist (indeed, he used to write for magazines like *CU Amiga*, *Zero* and *Your Sinclair*), came up with the idea. Some of our development people in Ireland wanted to do a Cinemaware-type product based around the theme of 'B' movies, you see, and we started looking around for a suitable licence, but Sean – who knows about these things – immediately jumped up and said 'If your making a game based around a crap film it has to be *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, because that's famous for being simply the crappest one there is'. When we eventually managed to get hold of a copy of the video we simply couldn't believe how bad it is! The game we've come up with is very knowing and very tongue-in-cheek and hopefully very, very funny.'

You guys have built up quite a rep now for doing driving games, and with the second *Lotus* game due soon it seems to be continuing. Is it something you intend to keep up?

'I think we'll give the driving games a rest for a while, to be honest. We're going to go a bit more actioney, a bit more arcadey, and a bit more upmarket – basically just diversify a bit more. There are people out there who remember Gremlin from before we were known as the driving game specialists, you know!

'Our basic thinking is that a two player driving game is a two player driving game, and if we give it our best shot with the second *Lotus* we're going to really exhaust that area for a while. Better all round really to try and come up with something new.'

Everything seem to be developed out of house these days. That's not the Gremlin I remember.

'We have to – it's simple. It just takes a lot more people to complete a product nowadays, especially if it's across a number of formats. You have to make sure that every product is the best that you can possibly do too, and that can mean making sure you get people who are particularly good at a certain sort of game to work on that project. It also means you have to get a lot more selective about what you release.

'For instance, with something like *Gary Lineker's Hotshot* – which isn't a bad game – we never released it on 16-bit at full price because we thought it simply wasn't good enough to justify the price tag. We held it over and brought it out on GBH, our new budget label, at £9.99.

'It's a similar story with a new product we've got called *Pegasus*. It's always looked good visually, but when the developers first brought it to us it didn't play all that well at all. It's taken a lot of work to get it to the stage it's at now, and I really believe it's got the potential to be a first class product. If we can't honestly review a game ourselves at around 85 percent I'd be very unhappy about letting it go out. It's as simple as that. There's too much at stake now – you just can't afford to put flawed products out there anymore'.

Finally, what does GBH stand for?

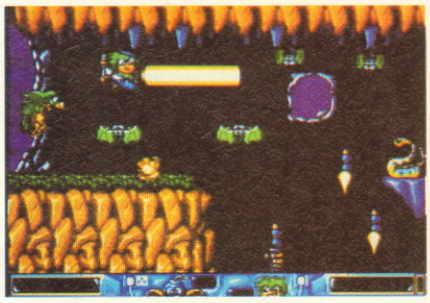
'A-ha! That's really up to you! If you're a young, aggressive sort of a person, it'd probably stand for 'Grievous Bodily Harm', which sounds suitably macho and so on. If, on the other hand, you're a bit older, a bit more mature, you're more likely to think of it as 'Gremlin Budget Hits' or similar. It's certainly a striking phrase, wouldn't you say?'

Thank you, Ian. If you're going to keep making jokes like that I think we'd better leave it there.

video recorder! To get out he has to fight his way through a number of levels – there's a western level, a medieval one, a gangster setting, a sci-fi world and a horror world – though it's all a bit too cute to be really nasty. Because the game has a slightly unreal, dream-like feel, the kid floats through it all rather than walking and jumping, making the control action seem very shoot-'em-up like.

'One thing we're proud of is the variety in the game – some bits are eight way scrolling, some move horizontally and so on – but on a more technical side we've got a very slick new parallax scrolling routine that uses more colours than usual. We've got the screen update running much, much faster than usual too. In fact, I'd say it's as quick as many arcade machines.'

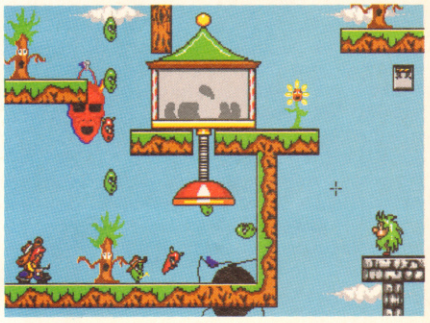
***Videokid*: He's an odd-looking chap, this *Vidkid* – his hair keeps changing colour...**



***Videokid*: ...as do his clothes, depending on the level (or 'video') he's currently in.**

JELLYBEAN

Now this one is weird. Imagine, if you will, the hero from *Squeek* (or a similar Gonk-like creation) running around after hundreds of wiggling little jellybeans, every one of which is hopping and bouncing around the screen with *Lemmings*-like disregard for its own safety. The beans have various different looks and characteristics – some are more intelligent than others – but all (or at least the bulk of them) have to be eaten or trapped by your good self before you can clear the level. There's a problem with this though – not only are the beans hard to catch, there are plenty of other traps and nasty creatures about, all keen to get their chompers around them →



***Jellybean*: Ah, yes. Most peculiar. That's you there on the right (the rather sorry looking Gonk character), those other things are the beans, and, erm...**

***Space Crusade*: Imagine *Hero Quest* crossed with the high tech space-marine stuff of the movie *Aliens* and you've got some idea of what *Space Crusade* will be like. The look of your rather squat little men are all highly reminicent of the little lead models you get in fantasy role playing shops – hardly surprising, that's where the board game started life.**

too. Let too many beans get eaten or destroyed by other hazards and – uh-oh! – you won't be able to finish the level. Described in-house as a sort of anti-*Lemmings* (in that you're trying to kill the little critters – or herd them into your pre-set traps – not save them), it's a vertically scrolling cutesy arcade puzzle thing with a nice line in the bizarre – particularly the monsters who seem to break through the scrolling background in an attempt to get at the beans, almost like invaders from another game.

***Jellybean* programmer Tim May: 'I guess you'd call it a sort of anti-*Lemmings*.'**

SPACE CRUSADE

FRP fans will be waiting for this one – Gremlin's conversion of MB Games' follow-up to their incredibly successful fantasy board game, *Hero Quest*. *Space Crusade* (the computer game) retains the 3D isometric look of *Hero Quest* – at least for the action sequences – but the differences go beyond the fact that your *Dungeons And Dragons*-style characters have been replaced by robots, aliens, space marines and so on. For a start much of the game is played in plan view, which makes it rather easier to tell what's going on. Claimed to be 'an improvement on *Hero Quest* all-round really,' Gremlin aim to at least equal the success of the first game – the cardboard and plastic version of *Space Crusade* hasn't been around all that long but is already the sixth biggest selling board game in the UK apparently. Expect big things.

SUSPICIOUS CARGO

Not the sort of thing you'd expect from Gremlin at all really. This is actually a text based adventure with Cyberpunky overtones, mixing William Gibson novels, the film *Alien* and some surprisingly old-fashioned sounding arcade sequences in about equal measure. Allowing the player a *Wonderland*-like control over the size and positioning of text windows, icon strips and the like, it uses animated cameo pictures of characters, map screens and what the game spec refers to as 'animated stills' of the main locations. The plot sees an innocent and slightly down-on-his-luck space captain forced by your typically Cyberpunk all-powerful conglomerate to transport a mysterious cargo to earth.

The first part of the game sees the player control the actions of our hero as he smuggles his cargo through customs, takes off, avoids customs ships, fixes his hyper-space drive, sorts the suspended animation system and so on. Things really heat up in the second part though, when – yes! – a distress message from another ship wakes him up (shades of you-know-what), and things start to go wrong in a serious way. With everything from a bogus space pirate attack to the genetically-engineered alien killing machine (which indeed formed his cargo) escaping and running riot around his ship to cope with, the game's going to keep you very busy indeed.

Possibly the oddest thing about the whole affair – and it sounds like an intriguing scenario, you must admit – is the series of mini-arcade sequences you must complete at certain points in the game. The 'Repel Boarders' sequence when the space pirates attack actually turns out to be a variation on *Operation Wolf*, while the 'Moon Lander' bit works exactly as it sounds. All good old time fun, no doubt – perhaps the most interesting of these sequences being your 3D *Dungeon Master*-style stalking of the monster through the holds of the ship.

Suspicious Cargo has been put together by programmers Gareth Davis and David Lincoln, graphic artist Jules Holton and designer Martin Cowan at Imagitec.

Gareth, the window system you're using seems a bit like the one in *Wonderland*. Do you think that's the way forward for text adventures?

'Actually, originally it was a lot more like *Wonderland* than it is now. We started with a windows system, but it was just too slow – exactly as it was in *Wonderland*, which we weren't too impressed with – so in the end we went for a flexible fixed system, one which offers you eight variations on the layout, not quite as much as *Wonderland* but more than sufficient. Text-based games are pretty much dying and I don't think tacking windows on is really the answer – we've made sure the whole game is playable purely using the icons, and we've added these arcade-style sequences for a real change of pace'.

Don't you think you'll put off traditional adventure fans with these bits?

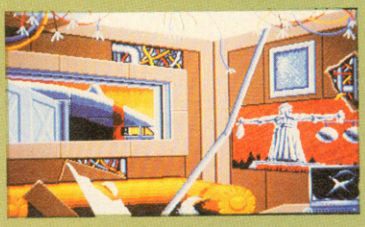
'Let's be honest, text adventure fans will snap up just about anything at the moment – there's nothing much around – so I don't think these action bits will put anybody off too much. We're aiming at the Sierra-type game player anyway, I guess – those people who are used to graphics with their adventures.'•

Game-wise, the buck stops here: James North-Hern, Gremlin Technical Director.

SUSPICIOUS CARGO

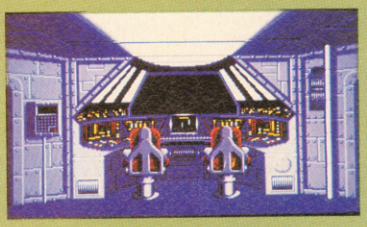
Here's where the game starts, in a 'coffin' (a small plastic pre-fab hotel 'room') rented out near a space port. Very cyberpunk.

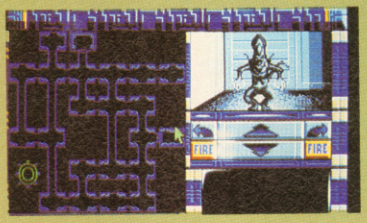
This space port in fact – on Titan, one of the moons of Saturn. It is here that you get recruited for your trip to Earth.



Erm, not exactly sure what's happened here, but it looks like someone's done a pretty good number on this room.

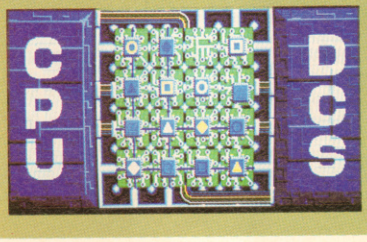
And here we have one of the so-called 'animated stills' it would seem – one of the control consoles on your space ship.





A-ha! One of the arcade sequences – this is part *Dungeon Master*, part-*Alien*, and wholly unusual for an adventure.

Repel boarders! A hostile corporation attempts to take control of your ship in this *Op Wolf*-inspired sequence.



And then there are the puzzley bits – this is possibly something to do with fixing your hyperdrive or suspended animation.

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IF WE'D KNOWN THEN...

DMA Design, brainchild of programmer David Jones, notched one of the biggest critical and commercial Amiga successes ever with Lemmings. We sent Stuart up to their Dundee hideout to mull over some other software hits and misses with them. (And talk about Lemmings).

IN THE BEGINNING

Dave - After working at the Timex factory in Dundee, I went to college, where I began programming with the Amiga version of *Menace*.

Brian - I was at college with Dave while he was doing *Menace*, and he asked me if I'd like to do the ST version.

Russell - I started off in the Spectrum market, and I did a game called *Moonshadow* which was originally going to be released by Ocean, but ended up as a budget game from Cascade, as well as a *Jet Set Willy* editor which I did while I was at school. It was around then I met Dave, as we both worked in the Timex factory in Dundee which made all the Sinclair machines. Then I switched to the PC and did versions of *Menace*, *Ballistix* and *Lemmings*, as well as *Ballistix* on the PC Engine. I was only actually part-time until last year, when I graduated from university. I did start a PHd this year, but I've given that up to go into software development full time. After the success of *Lemmings*, I decided it was about time to start taking it seriously!

LEMMINGS

Dave Jones: It's been two years since the original idea for *Lemmings*, but it first began to look like being a really good game about a year or so ago. That was when it started, and unfortunately it's never going to end - everyone else loves the game and I don't think even we'd get bored of it.

One of the things we experimented with was making individual lemmings a bit easier to pick out, because on some of the later levels you can be presented with a huge mass of lemmings and need to make one of them do something, but it's impossible to actually see which one is which. Eventually it came down to the design of the game itself, which didn't make that easy to do, so we had to leave it as it was. In our designs for *Lemmings 2*, we're looking at various ways of making lemmings do different things, and hopefully stopping them from congregating so much.

Russell: Something else we would have liked to include was some animated sequences between levels, more cartoony stuff like that. The one thing we'd really have liked to do was use the original tunes. At first we had things like the *Batman* theme, the *Mission Impossible* theme, and the tune from *The Addams Family*. We really liked them, but because of copyright problems we had to dump them. The idea would have been that there would have been an animated sequence with a lemming dressed as Batman, or maybe one being chased by a fizzing bomb fuse to the accompaniment of the *Mission Impossible* theme, which would then tie in with the following level of the game. In a similar vein, we'd have liked to have a bit more variation in the graphics. We'd have liked to put a computer-to-computer data link in for real full-screen two-player versions too. The graphics, particularly, are something that we're aiming to correct in *Lemmings 2*, the appearance of the game is going to change quite considerably, although the basic idea will be, er, similar (not that we want to give away too much at this point, you understand).

Brian: It's all just written down on paper and in our heads at the moment, it's going to be six months or so before anything really starts to happen. Hopefully *Lemmings 2* will be everything we weren't able to do in *Lemmings*. Well, except the tunes.

GORE

David: This is the DMA game that never was. It was a beat-'em-up that we got quite a way into programming, before the bottom fell out of the beat-'em-up market. It looked great, and the animation was lovely - I don't think there's been a computer character who moves quite so well - but at the end of the day we felt that there just wasn't any significant amount of game in it (partly due to the amount of memory the animation used up). We were happy with the graphics and everything, but it just wasn't happening for us, the whole idea of the beat-'em-up just wasn't something that we wanted to put the DMA name to. We've gone down quite a few roads like that, trying stuff out and then deciding that they weren't up to scratch, that's why there's only really been three games from DMA Design so far - it's not that we've been sitting around doing nothing, it's just that we only want to release good products, things that we feel happy with ourselves, regardless of whether they might sell or not. *Gore* is something that we've stopped, but it hasn't been completely abandoned, if we can come up with that missing gameplay element, who knows?

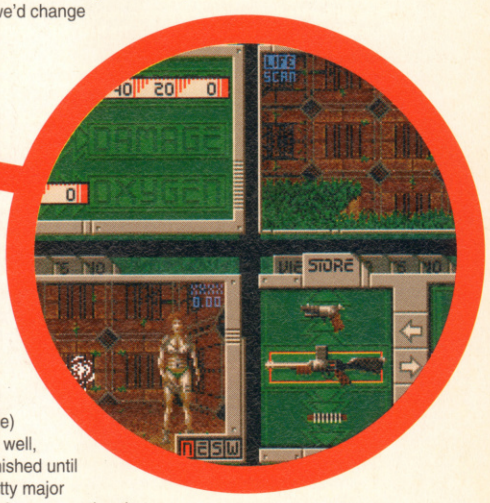
MENACE

Brian - This was the first ever DMA Design game. If I'd known then what I know now about *Menace*, I think I'd have put Dave's name on the front and pretended I had nothing to do with it! It was his baby really, he used to sit at the back of the class at college busily writing away, and everyone assumed he was taking notes, but he'd actually be designing graphics and enemy patterns for *Menace*. The game itself was a good starting point, I hadn't really done any 68000 programming before, it was the first major thing I did and to me, it was well worth doing, just, er, to do. Well, you've got to cut your teeth on something. It was one of the first games to actually use the Amiga's copperlist graphics, make use of the hardware, and this made it a real pain to convert to the other formats. If you've ever seen the ST version, it's completely dreadful.

Russell - *Menace* was a valuable learning experience, for reasons not really related to the game itself. Before then we all knew how to program, but it was the first time we'd had to, for example, work to a deadline. There were a lot of ways we'd have liked to improve *Menace* - I'd like to basically rewrite it completely from scratch - but we couldn't, simply because we had deadlines to keep. It made us realise that it wasn't a hobby any more, we were running a business now as well.

BLOOD MONEY

Brian: We'd have made it easier for starters, that's been the biggest criticism we've had. Certainly the first few levels are just too tough for most people. The last level of a game has got to be difficult, and we'd have kept that one as it is, but it needs to be a bit more forgiving to actually get into. Russell and Dave played the game and played it, and Dave himself is a big shoot-'em-up fan and he felt that he wanted to do a really hard game for shoot-'em-up fans. The problem was that not everyone who bought the game was looking for something quite that hard. I think we learnt this lesson with *Lemmings*, you have to have some easy levels to start off with and let people into the game. The first levels we did for *Lemmings* in the original version were things which are now in the Mayhem stage, but we spent ages working to try and get the difficulty curve just right. To be honest, I don't think there's much else wrong with *Blood Money*, the graphics and control system and so on are just about as good as they could be, I don't think we'd change them at all.



THE FUTURE

David: A lot of our time is being taken up with *Lemmings* stuff. As well as *Lemmings 2* we're doing a *Lemmings* data disk with lots of extra levels for the original game, a *Lemmings* construction kit, a *Lemmings* demo that we're going to be releasing into the Public Domain featuring the Lemmings Band, and we've had some creative input on the *Lemmings* coin-op too.

Other than that we're working on a game called *Walker* (working title) which is mostly being done by Ian Dunlop. It's coming along quite well, but there's a lot of work in it, and we're not expecting to see it finished until January or February of next year. In fact we've made some pretty major changes to it quite recently, taking out an *Nemesis*-style shoot-'em-up section that we felt just wasn't working. It looks like being a fairly good product, it's got some great animation, loads of parallax scrolling, and varied gameplay, although it's basically a shoot-'em-up at heart.

Scott is working on a 3D game under the title of *Hired Gun*, which is a sort of cross between *Gauntlet* and *Dungeon Master*. You can have four players at once (on the same Amiga), and they battle against each other in first-person perspective, using lots of realistic tactics like pushing each other off cliffs and shoving walls and blocks around to trap other players. Scott is doing most of the game himself, and he's spending a lot of time making sure it ends up exactly the way he's envisaged it, really polishing it up. It's the kind of thing we're going for in the future, we're aiming for the best gameplay and the best looking games too.

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GAMES REVIEWS CONTINUED

Welcome back to the game reviews. Budget, compilations and PD all have their own sections later on, but first, the full pricies...

SLIDERS

Publisher: Palace
Price: £25.99
Authors: Philippe Banwarth (game), Cedric Cazal & Franck Renard (graphics) at Microids
Release: Out now

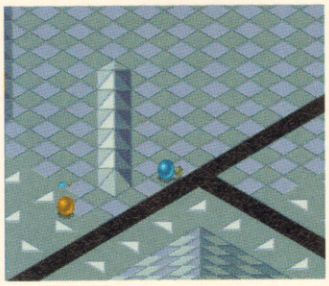
Oh dear, oh dear. I tried to like this, I really did. It's another of those slightly odd puzzler/future sports-type games that crop up from time to time – often, but not always, from French publishers – and tend to get at best a lukewarm reception, at worst a right slagging, in the pages of AMIGA POWER. It's a real pain – the publishers tend to think we've really got it in for them, the programmers are likely to get a bit upset, but what can we say? A crap game's a crap game's a crap game. And here's another one.

But just because a game itself is crap doesn't mean its component parts are. Indeed, *Sliders* has a lot going for it. Take the graphics, for instance – a bit characterless, perhaps, but they're clean and clear in a vaguely futuristic blueish sort of a way. The look, and some of the feel of the game, is that of early Amiga effort *Marble Madness* – the one where you had to roll a ball around a trap-filled landscape, looking for the way out.

Graphically they're pretty much the same, but this is a far more impressive effort scrolling-wise, with the balls here literally zooming up and down the courses at pinball-like speeds, and the screen keeping up with their progress, no problem at all. Indeed, in the horizontally split screen two player mode it becomes positively remarkable, with the same action kept tabs on from different viewpoints with no discernable lack of zip.

All this comes to naught though when you take a look at the game. It just doesn't work. You control one coloured ball, your opponent (either computer or human) the other, and it's your job to zoom off from your goal, try and collect the little puck thingie you'll find somewhere in the landscape, and then herd it towards the other goal. Of course, he (or it) is trying to do the same to you, and so the game quickly becomes hectic, yes, but all but uncontrollable also, as the two balls and the puck bounce and zoom around the chequerboard play area. It all works on magnetism, you see – either attracting the ball to you and 'running' with it, or reversing the polarity and 'kicking' it away from you – giving the game an uncanny resembalance to a one-a-side *Kick Off 2*.

This has its upside – speed and a



3D rolling chaos in Palace's *Sliders*.

Obsessed by *Shanghai*? Itching for *Shanghai II*? This snack won't spoil your appetite...

SARAKON

Publisher: Virgin
Authors: Mills Heidorm (code and graphics), Stefan Jeworowski (sound)
Price: £19.99
Availability: Out now

Anyone foolish enough to have tried Activision's *Shanghai* should beware of this clever little Oriental puzzler – it's just as likely to have you virtually welded to your Amiga for a similarly ridiculously length of time.

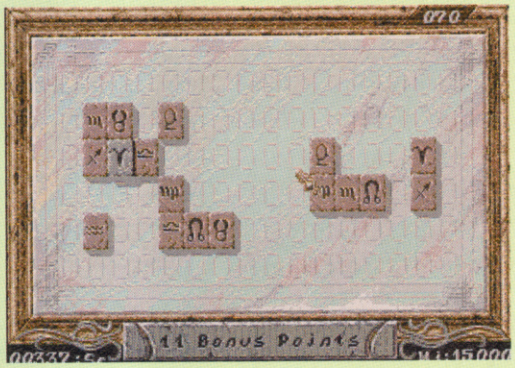
Like *Shanghai*, the principles are easier to grasp in situ than to explain in words, but here goes anyway: you are presented with a tableau of stones laid both next to and on top of one another. Each displays a funny ancient symbol. Click on one symbol, find another replica stone, click on that, and see them disappear. Trouble is (and here's the tricky bit) corresponding stones will only do your bidding if they have free edges, so if a stone is surrounded by loads of others you can't get at it.

Thus, the puzzle is to clear pathways through the collection of square stones, so you can get rid of them all within the short time limit. Of course there are zillions of variables too complex to discuss here but, as is usual with good puzzles, the rules are easy-peasy to understand once you get started.

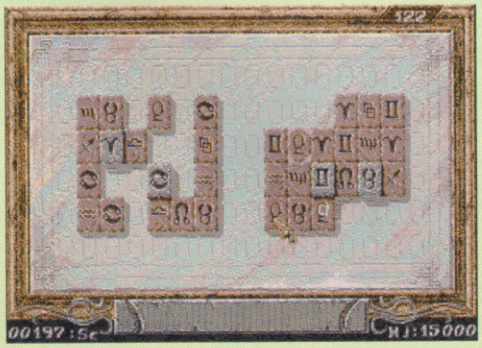
To win, all you'll need is quick thinking and a lot of patience. Once you start playing there's no time to think about trivia like the washing up, or where your next pint's coming from – total concentration is essential. Thankfully though, this isn't – unlike *Swap* say, also reviewed this issue – one of those games which need to be thought through before you get started. Everything has to be done on the move. If you clear a screen within the allotted time you'll move onto another one, and beating it first time will be nigh on impossible unless you are gifted with a most uncluttered and analytical brain. As the timer counts down an audible beat becomes louder and more unnerving (like the one on *Countdown* on TV), and bouts of panic can set in unless you fix your mind completely. My only complaint would be that some of the chinese-type symbols on the blocks look similar enough to each other for it to get a little confusing, but once you're really into the thing your concentration level becomes such that distinguishing between one set of wiggly lines and another becomes pretty easy.

Sarakon is one of the most transfixing games around, and, although it can hardly be described as a spectacular piece of programming, it is a sure-fire way to lose all touch with reality. •

COLIN CAMPBELL



...and yes, these chinese shapes do all look the same to a layman. It doesn't make it a bad game.



Okay, okay, so it's not the most graphically spectacular game in the world...

THE BOTTOM LINE

Another addictive puzzler from the Far East, which fans of *Shanghai* will find familiar, but still appealing in its own right. If you don't already own something similar, buy this game...

81 PERCENT

high degree of two-player-ability – and its downside, chiefly the old *Kick Off* problem of lack of controllability, made far worse here because with only three moving objects on screen, a mere twelve small courses to explore and none of the emotional tug of computer football, *Sliders* finds it very hard to hold the interest.

It's true you're given the ability to change everything about the game, from maximum speed of the balls to power of magnetic attraction – so it is possible to manipulate it into a form you find possible to play – but it's unlikely it'll hold your interest long enough for you to be bothered to do it. The few people who reckon they actually have some degree of control over *Kick Off 2* – rather than just enjoying it for its speed and pinball nature – may find they get something out of this. We don't.

So, *Sliders* joins *Stormball*, *Disk*, and the like in the ranks of not very playable and really not very interesting future sports simulations. That it's a better game – particularly technically – than any other recent contenders doesn't really count for very much I'm afraid. If you haven't already got it yet, buy *Speedball II* instead. If you have,then why not go for the not-too-dissimilar *Projectyle* – now on budget – and save yourself 15 quid? Or what about *Spindizzy Worlds*? That contains many of the same features. The point is, there are a lot of better ways to blow £25. • *MATT BIELBY*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Fast and perfectly well programmed two player ball game set on *Marble Madness*-type landscape. Competent, but repetitive, uninspiring and for many likely to prove all but uncontrollable. Only funny in two player mode, where you're both likely to be as bad as each other.

56 PERCENT

ROBIN SMITH'S INTERNATIONAL CRICKET

Publisher: Challenge Software
Price: £25.99
Authors: Astros Productions
Release: Out now

Oh dear. I not at all sure where to start with this one, so I guess I'll start with a question – who is this Robin Smith character anyway? Unfortunately, I don't know how to follow that up (I certainly don't know the answer) except with another question – like have there ever been any good computer cricket games?

And, indeed, have there ever been any good management games for that matter? (I've certainly not enjoyed many of them). When you realise that not only is *International Cricket* a) about cricket, b) a management game but c) endorsed by the utterly unfamous Robin Smith, you'll begin to see the extent of my predicament in reviewing this. I really, *really* don't know where to start.

This is *Robin Smith's International Cricket* – and, yes, he's welcome to it.

Well, let's start at the beginning, with the cricket bit. You could hardly accuse the game of being well presented, but it does feature a neat little pad of cricket scorecards where you can keep all your averages or whatever they are marked down. Now I've forgotten how you're meant to score cricket anyway – indeed, I'm not sure I ever really knew – so they're not of much use to me, but they do, I feel, nicely symbolise my feelings about this game. It's all about numbers, and statistics, and watching things you don't really understand.

It's certainly not about joining in the action, such as it is – once you've picked your opening batsmen or bowlers, laid out your fielders (if relevent) and watched your opponents pick the men they'll use, all you get to do is watch one white ant-like figure 'run' towards the wicket, bowl something that looks the size of a watermelon, and stand still as various other little ants flicker on and off screen haphazardly in their attempts to grab the melon and get it back towards the wicket. To point out that the batsmen don't actually seem to have to move to score any runs, or that the ball always gets returned to the wicket keeper, then miraculously re-appears in the bowler's hand, seems almost churlish – this is only a representation of the game we're watching, after all, not something you're intended to take part in and play.

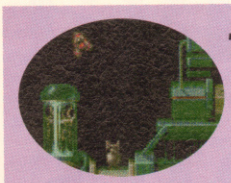
As for the strategy/management side of things – which you *are* meant to play – this seems as dull and pointless to me as all straight management games. There are certainly a lot of names, figures and so on bandied around – though I haven't the faintest idea if they're really accurate or not, and no real way of finding out. I guess the best I can do is abandon any intention of reviewing this as a cricket game – it'll no doubt sell almost exclusively to cricket fans, and there's so little available for them they'll probably lap it up – and treat it from the perspective of a normal computer game fan. For us, it's as lethargic, mysterious, old fashioned and uninvolving as cricket itself.

(PS I've just found out who Robin Smith is – he's a Hampshire and England batsman, and the guy who won us a test against the West Indies earlier this year. So sorry, it seems he is actually quite famous after all). • *MATT BIELBY*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Typically laughable graphics and lots of tables in this very average management game. Fine for the more forgiving cricket fan but a complete and utter waste of time for the rest of us.

30 PERCENT



***Thrust* with extra nastiness...**

THE EXECUTIONER

Publisher: Hawk
Price: £25.99
Authors: Andrew Prime, Stoo Cambridge, Doug Boari
Release: Out now

The box for this debut release from new label Hawk claims that '*The Executioner* is a new concept in quality arcade games'. The justification for this patently untrue claim seems to be that it combines straightforward arcade action with a strategic element – well, pardon me if I don't get the flags out and call the newspapers.

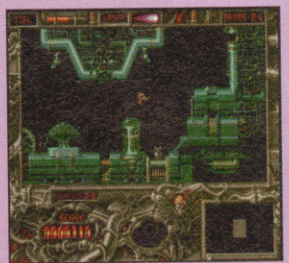
Cynicism aside, what have we got here? Well, the game consists of two main sections. One is the *Thrust*-style sequence where you pilot a spaceship around a series of planets collecting fuel and prisoners and looking for parts of a key which will allow you to find and kill some really nasty bad guy or other, the other is the much talked-about torture section where you beat up or electrocute your prisoners in an attempt to screw information about the locations of the keys out of them. You can also visit a shop to buy power-ups with the money you receive for selling prisoners as slaves – assuming of course that you haven't tortured them to death...

So far so unsound then, but the most unsavoury aspect of *The Executioner* is the amount of entertainment it provides. Both of the individual sections are done perfectly adequately, but neither of them ooze excitement, and the amount of disk-swapping you have to do between them was almost enough to make me think that Cinemaware had come back from the dead already. The 'Thrust' section screams out for keyboard control, especially on some of the fiddly tougher planets, and the torture sequence is both superficial and slightly tastelessly executed (no pun intended).

This gruesome looking screen is actually where all the torture takes place.

There's also an 'entertainment' option included on many of the menu screens, which when selected brings up a tempting-looking shot of a bar with music playing and a little arcade machine running an attract sequence in the corner. Sadly though, after being led on in this way, you aren't allowed to actually play the little game, or indeed do anything else, which leaves me completely bewildered as to why the sequence was included when the disk space could clearly have been put to better use (like cutting down on swaps, for a start).

I'd only been playing *The Executioner* for about 20 minutes before I started to be distracted by some of the more interesting things going on in the office. Pat the cleaner came in and moved a few coffee cups around, Mark cleared his throat a couple of times, Gary said something vaguely suggestive and my *BMX Bandits* tape ran out in the middle of one of my favourite songs, as it always does. Pretty soon I wasn't paying any attention to the game at all, and if that sounds to you like I'm implying it's a bit on the not-entirely-gripping side, then you're not far off the mark. In the end, it's all just too repetitive for me. • *STUART CAMPBELL*



***Thrust*ing along, collecting prisoners and shooting baddies in trad style.**

THE BOTTOM LINE

Not bad, if a bit repetitive, but you're not going to need adrenalin transplants after playing it. A bit repetitive too.

55 PERCENT

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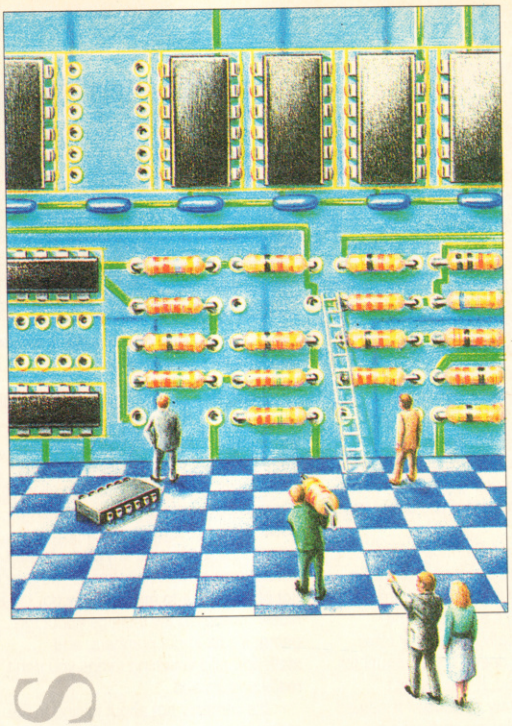

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THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

Publisher: Impressions
Price: £29.99
Author: Edward Grabowski
Release: Out now

***The Charge Of The Light Brigade* – pointing the way forward for wargames, but flawed in terms of gameplay.**

The Charge of the Light Brigade is set in 1853 and pits the British against the Russians. It uses the same control and presentation system as its predecessors (*Rorke's Drift* and *Cohort*), one which completely dispenses with flashing squares, movement phases and lists of numbers in favour of little animated characters who march around the map beating each other up and generally looking very warlike. Call it gimicky, but the effect this achieves is superb, and shows most other wargames up to be the archaic crap they really are.

The action can be interrupted at any time, allowing you to assess the situation and give orders to your troops. Unfortunately this is the point at which *Light Brigade* loses most of the marks it gains for presentation. Most of your orders will be concerned with moving troops, and over long distances this can only be achieved by giving the general direction (from eight possibilities) you want them to move in, hoping they pass somewhere near their intended destination and remembering to stop them when they reach it. There is an alternative method which works by pinpointing a specific destination, but this can only be done over very short distances, which isn't much use.

The other main snag crops up when the two armies clash. As soon as the first unit in a group meets the enemy, it starts fighting while the rest either mill around looking confused or just stand there dumbfounded. You're expected to tell each individual unit exactly what you want it to do, a pretty time consuming task when you've got about 200 of the blighters to play with. Surely some form of artificial intelligence could take over when opposing units got within a certain distance of each other?

On top of all this there are numerous minor irritations, such as an erratic reponse to mouse clicks, and the hopeless method for scrolling around the map.

It's a shame, because the frustration these problems cause just about ruins an otherwise innovative and entertaining game. It's great fun to play around with and watch, but attempting to put serious battle plans into action sadly isn't really feasible. This is definitely the way Amiga war games ought to be heading, and if the delightful presentation can be mixed with a more convincing style of gameplay, the old days of substandard wargames, could be coming to an end • *JONATHAN DAVIES*

THE BOTTOM LINE

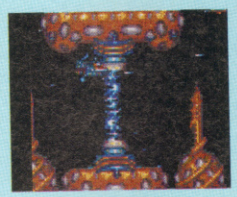
Looks brilliant and has plenty of instant appeal but falls down as a strategy game. Even so, it bodes well for the future of wargames.

68 PERCENT

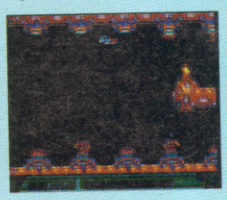
8-bit shoot-'em-up days are here again. But do we want them?

ARMALYTE

Publisher: Thalamus
Price: £25.99
Authors Derrick Owens and Paul Michalak at Arc Developments
Release: Out now



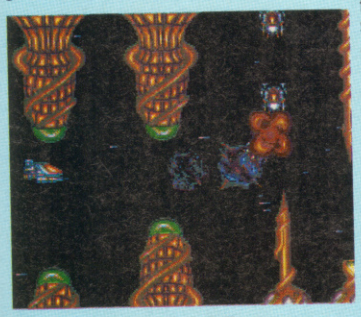
Smack! Skillfully flying into an energy field.



Phew, time for a breather before the skies fill up again.

Anyone who finds traditional sideways scrolling blasters irresistable will probably have spent the last few weeks ploughing through Activision's seemingly unsurpassable *R-Type II*. In comparison, it has to be said that *Armalyte*, based on a fairly ancient C64 hit, looks pretty sick. A surprise really, considering a) they're essentially the same game, and b) the two were put together by the same team, the normally excellent Arc Developments.

The theory behind it is simple; take one space ship, steer it through a horizontally scrolling space-scape, tackle an assortment of deadly obstacles, and attempt to dismantle whole fleets of hostile enemy ships. Naturally, there's the obligatory selection of end-of-level guardians to negotiate. *Armalyte* also shares with the *R-Type* games the super blaster available by holding down the fire button. So where's it gone wrong here? Well, whereas *R-Type II* was almost faultless, *Armalyte* is bugged by some lazy and thoughtless programming. It's pretty enough, and fairly tough – too tough from the outset, I'd say – but it's about as user friendly as *Quest For Glory II*. At the end of each and every game you have to sit through both a still graphic of your trashed space cruiser, and then an (admittedly pretty) animation before it lets you get into the game again. This is, of course, infuriating – on the early stages (where you're bound to make loads of mistakes) you're watching this rubbish more than you're actually playing the game! I'm sorry, but snail-like loading is just unforgiveable.



From the creators of *R-Type II* comes something not very spectacular at all.

It's also silly to insist on giving players only three lives with no chance to continue play. I know some people complain that continues make games too easy to complete, but their omission tends to suggest the game isn't quite as large as it might be.

Still, if you can stand these irritations (and you'll have to be pretty mellow not to lose your rag) then *Armalyte* isn't all bad. It's tough, so getting through each section is a satisfying experience, and graphics and animation are respectable enough, if a little two dimensional.

Even so, despite the irritations, it is a game I found myself coming back to again and again – not so much because it impressed me, or even bugged me, but because I'm such a hopeless sucker for sideways scrolleing blasters. That said, *Armalyte* isn't a total waste of time, just a bit of a waste of time. • *COLIN CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Sloppy and inadequate shoot-'em-up, but still appealing to die-hard fans of the genre. Pretty, but not nearly good enough to compete with the best.

58 PERCENT

METAL MUTANT

Publisher: Silmarils (Palace)
Authors: In house
Price: 25.99
Release: Out now

Cute and robotic – that's *Metal Mutant*

Computers are a rum old bunch. No sooner have you spent a billion dollars developing them and sending them out into the big, wide world, then they cock up on you. Just like that. It's a bummer. Hal did it in *2001*, closer to home Cybercon III did it in, erm, *Cybercon III*, and now Arod 7's sniffing up the same tree – he started off okay, looking after lots of colonies like he was told to, but then all the power got to his circuit boards, he did a bit of a Maggie, and now he's pitching for universal domination and all that.

So something's got to be done. Cue Mr Mutant, who's a much nicer chap. Except he's not actually just one chap, but three. One minute he's a cyborg, the next moment - ping! - he's turned into a dinosaur, and the next moment after that - double ping! - he's a tank. It's a bloody good trick with the chicks...

Armed with different weapons, limbs, body armours, varying levels of intelligence, you-name-it-this-guy's-got-it, *Metal Mutant* seems like the complete solution, adaptable to every conceivable situation, and completely rust-free to boot.

Silmarils' latest title is a kick-blaster arcade puzzler, set on a green planet called Kronox. There are three levels, kicking off on the surface, then moving through a sort of factory level into a space complex. Arod's sitting at the end of 130 screens. On each of these you'll have specific tasks to attend to – killing baddies, picking up weapons, and squidging your grey matter around a trillion indy-dinky puzzles (basically).

It's a simple concept, but it works well. After the first few screens (each with its own reptilian monster), you're wondering if it's ever going to pick up, when it does exactly that, and you suddenly realise you've actually just learnt quite a bit about which of the three 'mutants' to use in which situation, and how to juggle their skills. The learning curve reaches its dizzy peak at the end when you're up against Arod – he has access to any one of 27 weapons, which you must answer quickly. Playbility-wise, *Metal Mutant* comes up trumps. It's also helped by some excellent presentation. The baddies are given enough space to really come alive and take on their own identities. But overall, its charm is its simplicity. Structurally, it's dead straightforward. But it's so jam-packed with good ideas,that it becomes terribly hard to resist • *ANDY IDE*

THE BOTTOM LINE

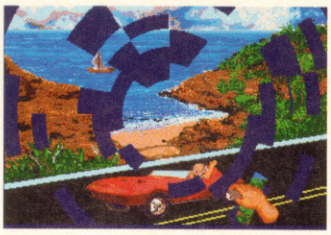
Dainty arcade puzzler, with some very neat presentation. Straightforward, but innovative at the same time.

78 PERCENT

LIVING JIGSAWS

Publisher: Miles Computing (The Software Business)
Authors: Peter Fokos, Brian Dixon
Price: £24.99
Release: Out now

I can't help feeling that jigsaw puzzles are getting dangerously close to being museum pieces. Sure, they were suited to the days when people had nothing better to do with their leisure hours than listen to grim radio broadcasts, play cards, read books and generally 'make their own entertainment', but today? Somehow arranging colourful and eccentric shapes of wood or cardboard – it's hard to see what you gain by putting the action onto a computer screen.



Picking up the pieces in *Living Jigsaws*. This jigsaw is almost complete, whereupon the car will drive down the road.

Actually, it's not that hard to *see* as such – fairly obviously, the pictures you build up are animated, hence the 'living' part – it's just hard to *understand*. Is seeing a rather sugary view of a hot air balloon float over an English landscape, or watching an ugly dinosaur's last moments in the locality of a seriously irate volcano, really enough to justify spending 25 quid? Pleasingly, each individual piece is actually animated too, meaning objects passing through the main screen will also appear on loose pieces. This isn't especially useful, but it is a kinda neat techie trick.

The game works like this. You've got a dozen picture puzzles, and using the mouse you've got to move pieces from the storage screen to the puzzle screen, then place them the correct way round and in the right place. Each puzzle can be 'cut-up' any way you like from a selection of different styles of piece, and there's a selection of four difficulty levels, based mainly around how large and numerous the bits are. Manipulating the difficulty factor of the puzzles isn't the only 'advantage' *Living Jigsaws* has over table-top versions. You can also cheat. Pressing certain keys will actually place the pieces correctly, with the aid of a 'Help Elf', though why you'd want to do this I don't know – it rather defeats the object of the game. Still, it's not something you need to waste much time worrying about – unless you're a bit simple you won't be laying out a whopping £25 for such as this.

Quickly, then, two reasons why this is not a wise purchase:

1) Computer jigsaw as a concept is unbelievably limited and a bit of a non starter really.

2) This isn't even a good computer jigsaw game – it's slow, primitive, and lacks any charm or wit whatsoever. I could imagine someone under the age of six gleaning a smattering of fun from the pretty pictures, but little more than they'd enjoy from a normal jigsaw. The Amiga was made for better things – methinks this jigsaw puzzle should have been left in its box. • *COLIN CAMPBELL*

in the correct order looks rather less than thrilling.

The whole idea of jigsaws seems even sorrier – if that's possible – on computer. Like last month's *Tangram*, it's a form that works perfectly using little bits

THE BOTTOM LINE

Wrong-headed attempt to bring an unsuitable pastime to the Amiga. Badly executed from the start – it would probably be scorned by jigsaw fans – but perhaps an entertaining alternative to shoot-'em-ups for the very young.

36 PERCENT

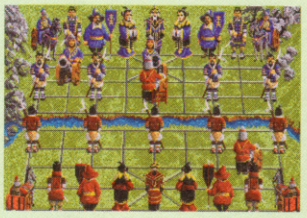
A chess game with snazzy animated graphics? Well, yes. But...

BATTLE CHESS II – CHINESE CHESS

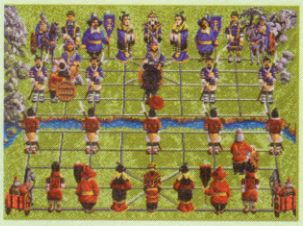
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Price: £25.99
Author: Greg Christensen
Available: Out now

The original *Battle Chess* made a name for itself as one of those programs you buy so you've got something impressive to show your friends. As a chess game *per se* it wasn't really up to much, but the (optional) 3D view of the board with its little figures going through their pre-set battle routines when any piece took another one was cute – in look at least, the game was half way towards being the hologram version they played in the *Star Wars* flick.

A nice thing to own then, but of really of little more than novelty value – two years ago, when it was first released, defeated pieces going through 'amusing' little expiration routines involving the bishop's head falling off (or whatever) were enough to have us rolling in our swivel chairs with mirth, but these days we're less easily pleased, and a second *Battle Chess* game would have to deliver something rather more.



It doesn't take long to learn the pieces.



One of our chums has been taken out.

Electronic Arts know this of course, and have gone to some pains to make *Battle Chess II* a very different proposition to the first game. For a start, and most obviously, they've based it on chinese chess, which is a very different game, with different pieces, different moves and even a river flowing down the middle of the board! They've also made sure you can play the game in straight overhead view mode too, with little counters instead of animated sprites – ideal for when you're bored with the new set of 'amusing' graphics and want to actually get down to playing the game.

The animations are faintly amusing, if extremely repetitive. You can play in 2D, but that's not much fun either.

They've succeeded too – *Battle Chess II* is a very different game, it's just not a particularly good one.

Problem number one: clever little graphical routines are no longer novel, and while these are different to those in the first one, they're still really only 'okay'. They can be painfully slow too – in normal use each graphical routine takes so long for the disk to access that by the time it's finished you'll have forgotten why you made the move in the first place – though this is less of a problem once you've installed the thing on a hard disk.

Problem number two: Chinese Chess itself isn't that interesting – you'll have no trouble working out why it's never really established itself outside of the mother country. It's nowhere near as flexible and challenging as 'proper' chess, and most people's total unfamiliarity with the pieces makes it off-putting to get into.

Problem number three: The software is all over the place. It's hard to get pieces to go where you want them, and trying to use the 'suggest move' option is a nightmare. I played the computer and asked it for some advice, and the bloody thing beat me in three moves. Do you know what it's like to be taken in and cheated by a piece of software? (If you spend £26 on this, you'll find out soon enough).

No, sorry EA, but this just doesn't cut it. If you want to play an alternative game of chess, we still suggest you try Exocet's excellent *Distant Armies*. • *COLIN CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Boring, slow and irritating. Only the most fanatical chess fiends will squeeze any real pleasure from this oddity.

48 PERCENT

CONFLICT MIDDLE EAST

Publisher: SSI/US Gold
Price: £30.99
Author: Norm Koger
Release: Out now

No problem guessing what this one's all about really, is there? The game's subtitle speaks volumes – 'Arab-Israeli Wars: 1973-?' In fact, the question mark is sort of irrelevant now – real-life events in the Middle East have already grimly overtaken the game's pre-Operation Desert Storm 'contemporary' scenario.

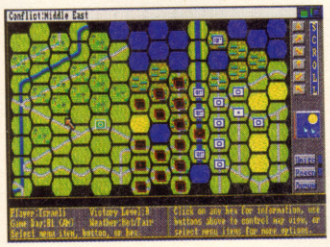
Reality aside though, how does this work as a wargame? Well, for a start you must remember that wargames are what designers at SSI have traditionally been best at, and *Conflict Middle East* represents pretty much the state-of-the-art in that particular branch of gaming. The problem isn't really with the game itself so much as with whether what passes for 'state-of-the-art' in wargaming terms is really good enough any more.

But first, how does it work? Well, pretty much in traditional wargame terms. Units are displayed as icons on a hexagonally patterned terrain map and movement and combat are handled in a

series of controlled phases which make up a turn. You can play either against the computer or a human opponent, take either side, play out battles from the '73 or '90s war, pick the time of year and go for complete or limited intelligence. If you're playing on your own you can choose to alter the opposition's effectiveness.

One thing soon becomes clear – logistics, not just combat, are essential to grasp if you want to nick some Sinai while nobody's looking. The most important thing to remember is not to over-reach yourself. Supply nets try to keep your frontline troops stocked up with fuel and ammunition as best they can, but if you stretch them too far you'll soon start losing your front line armour en masse.

Don't fret though – it's not too complicated. Remember, in a game like this it's perfectly acceptable to take your



***Conflict Middle East* is traditional in almost every respect, right down to the hex map.**

time with things. Time only passes when you tell it to – either by ending a turn or carrying out actions in a turn. This gives you the chance to skim the manual between moves (and thankfully, it's a clear and easy one to read). To start with, I was confused to find that airborne cavalry units are identified as artillery units (because that's what they're most like in effect), but a quick flick through the manual and I'd worked out what was going on.

But back to my point about the validity or not of traditional wargames. This is without doubt a clever one – something as simple as the weather can hamper crucial air strikes – but although I'm still making progress, I reckon I'll soon be able to defeat anything the program throws at me, and then the game will only be brought out when there's a chance that the company I keep fancies a bash.

Wargames have been moving closer to simulations territory recently and I think they've been better for it. With stuff like *M1 Tank Platoon*, you get more of the feel of playing a 1/300th scale micro armour game – even as seen from the tabletop which is ideal. Playing the redundant 1990s scenario, I couldn't help feel that *Conflict Middle East* is already something of an anachronism. Historically, it's a fine wargame. But in style and subject, it has little to offer those interested in what might unfold in another Middle East military crisis. Real wargamers have moved on. • *SEAN MASTERSON*

THE BOTTOM LINE

A fine traditional wargame, but it's a form that looks increasingly left behind by the more sophisticated wargame techniques now in use.

68 PERCENT

Just when good puzzlers seemed to have dried up, they did.

SWAP

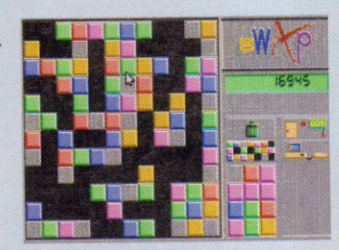
Publisher: Palace
Price: £25.99
Authors: Microids
Release: Out now

Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. It looks like we're finally getting towards the bottom of the barrel as far as these puzzle thingies are concerned. We're not quite there yet perhaps, but recent releases like *Logical* and (ugh!) *Quadrel* have looked increasingly ho-hum with each new game released, and while the software publisher's legs aren't exactly sticking out of the top of the container as they poke around inside for more, they do seem to be bending over at quite an alarming angle.

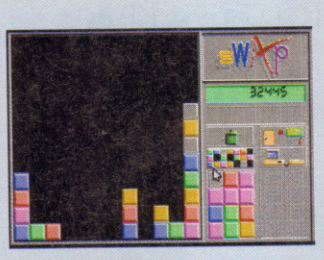
They've bent over quite a long way to bring us *Swap*, that's for sure – an outrageously simple little puzzler which takes about two minutes to get the hang of, if rather longer to master. Perfectly respectable sounding so far for a puzzler, it's true, but this does lack one important element – any sense of interest or intrigue at all. A good puzzle makes you really want to beat the game but frustrated that you can't, and I suspect this is where *Swap* is going to have difficulties.

So what's it all about? Well, you're presented with a grid built up of loads of variously coloured shapes. These can be big squares, little squares, hexagonals, triangles – you know the kind of thing. In any one puzzle though, the shapes are all of the same type (and are therefore interlocking).

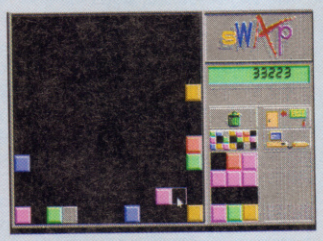
By clicking on any intersection between two shapes you can flip them around so each takes up the place formerly occupied by the other. You want to keep doing this until two shapes of the same colour meet, at which point – bingo! – they disappear. The object, then, is to clear the board in the shortest possible time, and with the smallest number of swaps.



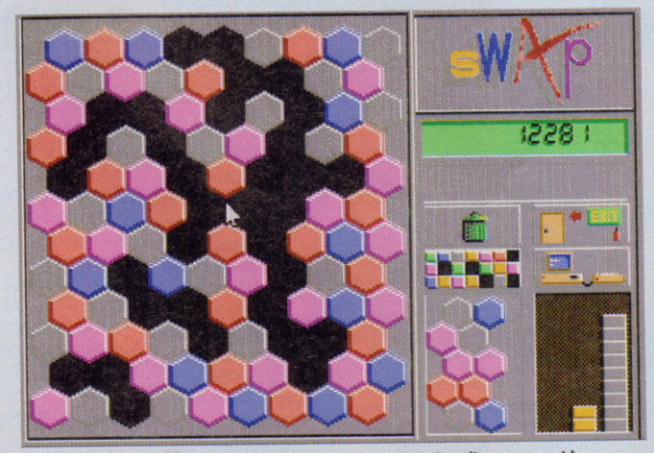
All simple stuff – just click on those intersections, swap the shapes, and see them disappear.



When you've run out of ideas, hit the Cascade screen, and all the blocks tumble down to the bottom of the screen.



Drag over the spare blocks to kill off all those last little blighters.



A collection of differing shapes give the game some variety (but not much).

That's not all though – there are a few little extras to help you along. For example, when you've run out of swapping ideas you can press a button and all the shapes left hanging about loose at the top of the screen will cascade down towards the bottom, landing in new heaps and hopefully offering new opportunities to disintegrate them.

That's not the only piece of help you're offered too – for instance, you're presented with a small selection of extra shapes which you can place on the grid too, thereby cancelling corresponding shapes. (Just take a peek at the screen shots, and you'll get the general idea, okay?) Of course, as you progress through the levels these little extras become a rarity, so working out the best way of swapping shapes becomes mucho important.

However (you knew it was going to come, and yes, I'm afraid it's a pretty huge 'however'), the problem is simply that all this just isn't terrifically captivating. For a start, you're spending so much time swapping shapes that you're making things disappear all the time, and it soon loses the little satisfaction it once held. You also have to remember that one mistake early in the game can foul things up a treat, and who wants to work out a complete solution to each screen all the time before starting a puzzle? Not me, that's for sure.

The major problem with *Swap* is that it provides very little reward for quite a lot of work. I have to confess to being more than a little bored of the whole affair after a matter of a few hours, and to glean any extra enjoyment would mean becoming extremely proficient (not a prospect that fills me with excitement).

Even so, it's the kind of game that'll fill a few idle hours, and as a programming job it's at least satisfactory. Not great, not terrible, just a game that would make far more sense at a budget price. • *COLIN CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Entirely average shapes and colours puzzler which could only appeal to die-hard *Solitaire* types. Strictly for those who've exhausted *Puzznic*, *Plotting*, *Gem'X* et al.

59 PERCENT

STRIKER MANAGER

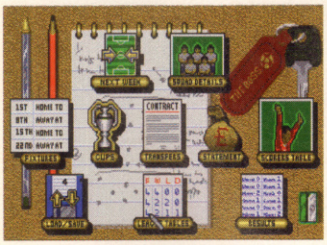
Publisher: D&H Games
Price: £24.99
Author: John Atkinson
Release: Out now

Football management games were born to be bad. Even the most respected seem to be either woefully inadequate (*Football Manager*) or unbelievably tough (*Player Manager*). And the less said about the less known varieties, the better.

The only real exception seems to be *Football Director II* from D&H Games, so I warmly greeted the opportunity to test my minor league skills on the same publisher's new *Striker Manager*. Unfortunately, this game reeks of all that is wrong with sports management affairs, so brace yourself for a pretty furious rant...

No matter how much you try it seems impossible to take any authority over *Striker Manager*. In the management sequences opportunities to actually make decisions are extremely rare, and anyway, whatever you do seems to be totally ignored. The short action sequences lack any direction or, for want of a better word, goal. The animation is too crap to be laughable, it's just plain sad.

Playing games seems to be little more than watching text on the screen switch from 'Defence' to 'Midfield' to 'Attack' and back around again. The boredom is peppered with tiny goal-mouth shots wherein players seem to shoot the ball in just about any direction.



***Striker Manager*: Nice options screen, shame about the rest of the game.**

At the end of each match we are treated to a results service covering the first and second division results from almost every European country. This reveals the game's aspirations as a pan-European management extravaganza. John Atkinson, the game's author, might claim that this is a 'comprehensive' service. In fact it's almost totally irrelevant to the game, and worse, impossible to switch off – it goes on forever.

We look forward greatly to a revamped version of the two-year old *Football Director* (due within a matter of weeks). It'll take quite some game to stop football management going the way it's been threatening to for years – into oblivion. • *COLIN CAMPBELL*

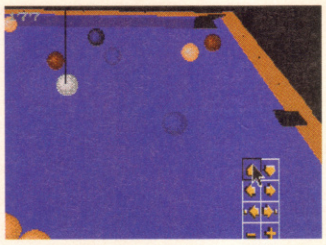
THE BOTTOM LINE
I'm afraid it's yet another terrible soccer management game. Look elsewhere for entertainment.
18 PERCENT

BILLIARDS II SIMULATOR

Publisher: Infogrames
Price: £25.99
Release: Out now

Why spend £25.99 on Infogrames' *Billiards II Simulator* when, for a pound less, you could pick up the renowned *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker*? Or, for a great deal less, why not plump instead for MicroProse's *3D Pool* on budget?

The answer is, because neither of these options would let you play 'billiards', of course. And in going for one of the other games you'd also miss out on some of *Billiards II Simulator*'s wackier, French features, such as the option to play 'crazy pool' on an octagonal table with one pocket in the middle (it'll do ordinary pool as well), and the slightly peculiar main menu screen with its pool hall sound effects. That being said though, taking up either of the other options would see you ending up with a much better game. *Billiards II*'s main problem is the near impossibility of lining up a shot properly. In 2D mode, even with the help of the rather cumbersome 'ball path' option, it's very hard to tell where the ball's going to go. It's a bit easier in 3D mode, but the table rotates in such large increments that any level of accuracy is very tricky indeed. The shot-strength meter doesn't help matters either. It wobbles up and down and you have to try to stop it in the right position – a very silly idea indeed. The whole game's pretty silly, actually. It's awkward to play, lacks any sort of coherent 'feel' and just doesn't make the grade. • *JONATHAN DAVIES*



***Billiards II Simulator* – fails dismally in the face of some pretty stiff competition.**

THE BOTTOM LINE
Might just about be okay if there weren't any other 3D pool/snooker games around. But there are, so it's not.
47 PERCENT

We're all for 8-bit style games, but joystick waggling anyone?

INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP ATHLETICS

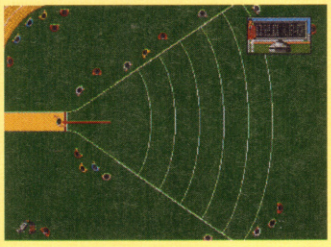
Publisher: Hawk
Price: £25.99
Authors: In-house
Release: Out now

When I suggested to fellow reviewers that this multi-event Olympiad would be getting a reasonably enthusiastic review there were cries of protest. After all, they reasoned, aren't the graphics laughably appalling? Isn't the game control useless and unwieldy? Aren't the graphics way out of date? And isn't the gameplay limited in the extreme?

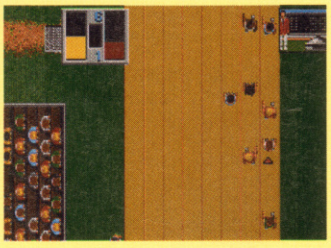
Well, yes, all that is undoubtedly true, but apart from the pretty second rate presentation this really is a lot of laughs, and although my first impressions were derisive, I ended up playing for hours.

You have about a dozen events to take part in ranging from 100 metres sprint (waggle the joystick madly and press fire for extra bursts) to javelin (waggle the joystick madly and press fire to release the spear) to 5000 metres (use the joystick to keep a balance between energy used and energy left). Yes, it's all very simplistic, but after being beaten soundly a few times by computer athletes I got to practicing, and soon started getting fired up by the old competitive spirit. And when a few medals started coming in, I was hooked. Perhaps it is the hilariously bad presentation which adds to this game's appeal. There is a commentator who pops up every now and again to reveal just which country is leading the medals table – the facial animations of this guy are so unrealistic, it looks as if the poor chap is chewing an iguana.

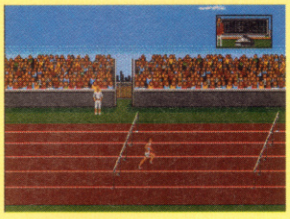
And yes, it's true that some of the events simply do not work – the 5,000 metres is far too long to retain any interest at all, and the pole vault is difficult to get the hang of. But, in the main, these dozen little games are a fun diversion. The only trouble is, who wants to spend £25 on something so off the wall? Especially when similar games like *Daley Thompson's Olympic Challenge* are available on labels like The Hit Squad at less than half the price? Still, there are loads of events, lots of laughs, if not too much in the way of serious gameplay here. • *COLIN CAMPBELL*



I don't believe it – I've actually managed to putt that shot straight for once!



The not-terribly-impressive overhead view of the long distance running events.



Oh dear. Everyone's already finished the hurdles, but me... (Ahem).

This slightly ridiculous-looking commentator pops up constantly. Thankfully a press of the fire button will soon send him packing.

THE BOTTOM LINE
Terrible presentation, but lots of fun and not a little addictive. There's hours of frenzied joystick waggling here, but even with the game's good points, it's hard to justify the asking price.
59 PERCENT

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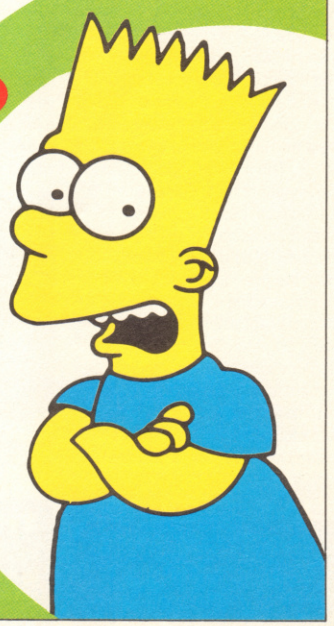

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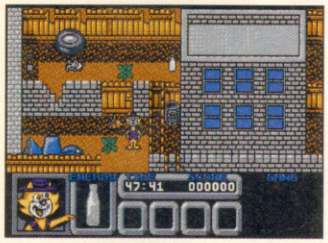
BUDGET

The compilations are reviewed over the page this month, so this spread's pure budgies – including one remarkable game that scores more than any other in AMIGA POWER ever..!

TOP CAT
IN BEVERLEY HILLS

Publisher: Hi-Tec
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now

We've been pestering Hi-Tec for months now, but they repeatedly failed to send us a copy of this. I wonder if there's any reason why?



The indisputable leader of the gang – and he's hurt by *mice*? Surely some mistake!

The first disappointment in *Top Cat* is the lack of the original theme tune, replaced for doubtless economic reasons by a crap and irritating jingle-type thing. The second disappointment is the absurd nature of the obstacles in the game. *Top Cat* (who is, remember, a cat) is damaged by mice, rats and birds, yet not by big growling dogs. The third disappointment is the dire movement of the inanimate obstacles (dustbins, beach balls etc), which makes it impossible to tell if they're rolling, bouncing, gliding or whatever. Coupled with the pseudo-3D viewpoint this makes enemy-avoiding a very imprecise art. The fourth disappointment is the utterly, utterly bog-standard arcade adventure game design, and the final disappointment is the realisation that we, just like you, had to go out to the shops and fork out eight quid for this. (They STILL wouldn't send us a copy you see). It wasn't worth it. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Undemanding stuff that might be okay for the under-12s, but that's about all. Cute but totally vacuous.

46 PERCENT

BEACH VOLLEY

Publisher: The Hit Squad
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now

This was one of the first Ocean games to be aimed squarely at the ST and Amiga market, although just why the Manchester software giants imagined that it would take 16-bit processor power to produce this two-a-side volleyball game is anyone's guess. Then again, the multiple frames on the beautifully-animated characters must have gobbled up bytes, as must the appalling 'rock'n'roll' tunes and the cute animated interludes between screens as your team travelled all over the world to jump around unfeasibly and occasionally knock a ball about a bit.

On the other hand, it's difficult to imagine the barren gameplay being too memory-intensive, and programming lots of tricky moves and interesting extras clearly wasn't a worry. Nope, I can't see why this game couldn't have been done on 8-bit machines – indeed, I seem to remember there was some talk of it at the time, but the versions were too crap to release (or something). Whatever, as a reviewer of Amiga software, I don't half wish it had. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

It may look good, with those big sprites and everything, but just try playing it...

THE BOTTOM LINE

It's incredible that this was once £25. Don't let the cartoon graphics trick you into buying this poorly-disguised variation on a poor tennis game.

28 PERCENT

ARCADE TRIVIA QUIZ

Publisher: Zeppelin
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now

Do software publishers know something we don't? It's the only feasible explanation for the constant stream of gambling games like this, where the only point of the original was to win money – something which the Amiga clearly can't deliver. This particular release follows a pretty standard format, with loads of multiple-choice questions eventually giving the opportunity to win some cash by answering, er, some multiple-choice questions. There are six fairly broad categories of teaser to chose between, and up to three players are catered for. The questions are well-mixed for difficulty, but on only my second game I was already beginning to find them repeating. The format is remarkably similar to, but not as well designed as, Code Masters' *Pub Trivia Simulator* from a year or so back, but this version does have a completely excellent piano soundtrack as some form of compensation. There isn't really an awful lot else I can tell you about this one – if you can accept the concept this is a reasonably (but only reasonably) well-executed implementation of it, but as a one-player game it's a waste of money which could be better spent on the real thing, where there'd at least be the chance of winning something tangible. If you regularly have chums round to play with your Amiga though, you'll probably just about get your money's worth from it. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

Hmm. Well, at least the graphics are better than those in the average pub quiz game.

THE BOTTOM LINE

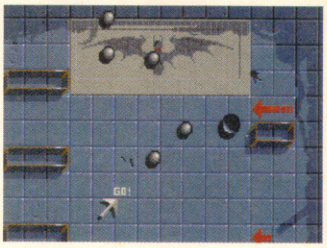
Depending entirely on how many of you there are, a completely pointless or fairly entertaining triv game. The brilliant music is a bit of a boon, but not exactly worth eight quid on its own.

54 PERCENT

BALLISTIX

Publisher: Sizzlers
Price: £7.99
Release: Late September

When I was young (a long time ago, believe me), I actually had the privilege of owning a *Crossfire* set – you remember, the thing where you had to knock a puck, air hockey-style, into your opponent's goal by firing lots of little ball-bearings at it. It was always a sure route to hours of fun and blistered fingers, but somehow it didn't seem like a very promising idea for a computer game. Nevertheless, with the addition of some power-ups and obstacles, that's exactly what we've got here on Sizzlers, Psygnosis' brand new budget re-release label.



***Ballistix*: Interesting, but badly executed.**

Oddly, one thing that hasn't been added is a computer opponent. In one-player mode you simply have the table tilted towards you, so that you have to shoot the puck uphill, which makes for a curiously unexciting feel. The game quickly becomes frustrating and pointless, and most of the dozens of levels will remain unseen by most people. Paradoxically, *Ballistix* is a game which is interesting (in concept) but boring at the same time. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

A nice idea which just doesn't work due mainly to the lack of confrontation. Novelty value only.

51 PERCENT

STACK UP

Publisher: Zeppelin
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now

Playing with the 'weather symbols' graphic set, one of many neat options in *Stack Up*.

Since Amiga fans are still waiting for a definitive *Tetris* conversion, this distinctly similar puzzle game may provide a worthwhile alternative.

Actually it's not so much *Tetris* as a variant on the Sega game *Columns*, where sets of three coloured blocks fall from the top of the screen and by changing the order of the colours in the line, you can form rows of same-coloured blocks. These then disappear, allowing the blocks above them to collapse *Klax*-style, opening up possibilities for multiple lines and big bonus scores.

The major difference is that in *Stack Up* the blocks fall in rows rather than columns, but in most other respects this is much the same game. You can vary the speed and difficulty, there's a practice

mode to let you get the hang of the concept before you throw yourself into it properly, and there's even an option to switch between four completely different (and rather appealing) sets of graphics.

The game is slickly presented and addictive (although the 'continue' seems a little out of place), with well-graded difficulty throughout and an absolutely gorgeous oriental tune accompanying the action. If you didn't like *Tetris* there's no point in you even thinking about it, but if you did there's no reason why you shouldn't love this little game to death – it does exactly what it sets out to do perfectly, and there are precious few games you can really say that about • *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

A lovely little puzzle game that's probably the closest thing to a true *Tetris* sequel we've seen yet.

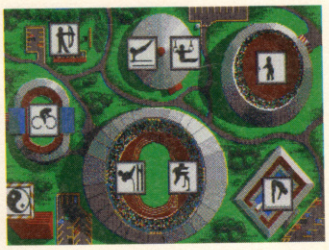
80 PERCENT

THE GAMES: SUMMER EDITION

Publisher: Kixx
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now

Any game which attempts to represent absolutely loads of Olympic events is going to end up spreading itself terribly thin, and *The Games: Summer Edition* is no exception. It features eight very different sports jammed onto two disks, and simply looks very old fashioned – people just don't come up with this sort of thing anymore. The point is emphasised by the choice of sports – there are some seriously oddball events included which any sensible person would have kept well away from the ever-fussy computer game format in the first place.

Take Velodrome Cycling, for one. This



The event selection screen. And what a veried bunch of events they are.

is the one where you go terribly slowly for ages and ages, trying to force your opponent to make his break, then peddle (or in this case waggle) like crazy in his slipstream, hopefully just beating him over the line. Yes, you're right, it doesn't work at all. The Hammer Throwing is a similar dead loss – seeming to consist of ages spent trying to get the hammer flying in the vague direction of the pitch, followed by (when you've eventually succeeded) instant cudos as a master of the sport. I don't think so. And then there's diving, which, sad to say, is merely a case of learning the correct joystick movement combinations to use as you fall.

It's all, to its credit, quite interesting in a weird, pointless sort of way. Any game which has martial arts, hurdling and archery on the same disk is worth a look merely for curiosity value, though you'll probably decide a look is all it really deserves. The downers – like the chronically slow loading times, and that frantic joystick wiggling control method which immediately relegates it to antique-status – are simply a bit too much nowadays. Even in 1988 this one had its long term playability severely questioned – today its little more than a novelty. • *COLIN CAMPBELL*

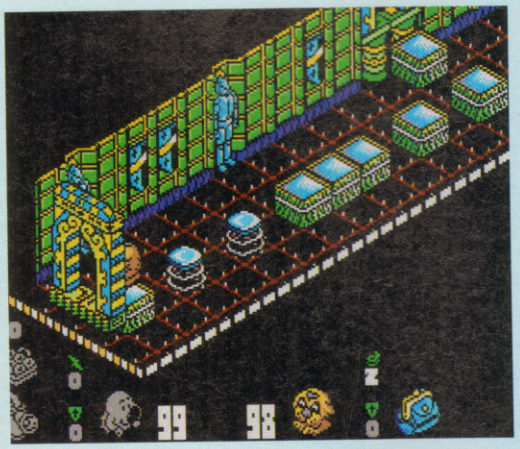
THE BOTTOM LINE

Tries hard, looks quite good, but gameplay-wise falls down all over the place. Strange, pretty, but not really a great

48 PERCENT

The highest rating yet in AMIGA POWER, and – hey! – it's for a budget 8-bit conversion!

HEAD OVER HEELS



3D isometric days are here again, with the 92 percent(!) scoring *Head Over Heels*. It may look very 8-bit and unimpressive, but just you start playing it!

Publisher: The Hit Squad
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now

Veterans of the 8-bit scene won't need any introduction to this game, but for the benefit of everyone else they're going to get one anyway. *Head Over Heels* was for many people the ultimate game in the genre spawned by Ultimate's legendary *Knight Lore*, the 3D isometric arcade puzzle adventure. It featured two player characters, Head and – oh go on, take a guess. The twin heroes had different characteristics and capabilities, and could be combined into one super-character to negotiate some of the game's trickier obstacles, although others would require Head and Heels to separate and take different routes. The ultimate objective was to retrieve five crowns from the evil Emperor Blacktooth, but that's enough plot.

What you need to know is that *Head Over Heels* is likely to give you some of the greatest game-playing pleasure you've ever had from your Amiga, and lots of it too. The game design is of a quality rarely – if ever – seen in a 16-bit arcade game, and the level of addiction is almost frightening. Head and Heels start the game in different locations, and getting them together is a sizeable challenge in itself. The reward for this is a character with superb powers of speed and manoeuvrability, but after a few screens your bubble of confidence is burst when you reach one which can only be passed by splitting the two comrades up again. This, of course, simply makes you all the more determined to re-unite them, and the cycle of challenge followed by reward followed by frustration is just one of the things which makes this game so utterly compulsive.

It's far from the only thing, though. The monstrous deviousness of some of the puzzles makes it all the more teeth-grinding when you lose a life (as you invariably do) on one of the embarrassingly simple ones immediately before or afterwards, and you'd be well-advised to have something soft strategically placed beside your computer to save you from punching goodbye to your warranty.

Head and Heels are re-united – their talents now combine to form a stupid-looking but pretty formidable good guy.

The game maintains a balance between addiction and frustration, though, by the use of the Reincarnation Fish, a novel gameplay device which acts as a RAMsave. On touching one of the fish, your game position is stored, and when you run out of lives you can restart the game from the last fish you reached, without all that boring techie knobbing around with actual save functions. This little touch is just one example of how much care has been taken to keep you locked up in *Head Over Heels*' little universe, and away from nasty computer talk. You'll never see a 'Decrunching Level Two' message in this game, pal.

Still, this is supposed to be an objective review, not a meeting of the *Head Over Heels* Fan Club, so here's a list of the game's bad points: the graphics haven't changed visibly from the original 8-bit versions; there aren't any keyboard controls.

Pretty crap for bad points, weren't they? The graphics are undeniably primitive for the Amiga, but they're gorgeous and cute in their own right and anyway, in the final analysis they're almost entirely irrelevant. As for the keyboard, it IS a pity (this is a game which was always meant to be played with keys), but the joystick controls won't give you any problems after 30 seconds' practice.

I'm running out of space now, and I haven't even told you about the user-friendly front-end with adjustable sound and control sensitivity, or about how clever and funny the in-game obstacles and puzzles are, or about half of the things that make me love this game so much. If you didn't believe that they used to write better games in the old days (creak creak), play *Head Over Heels* and eat your words. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

One of the best games in the world ever, and now it's on your Amiga for eight quid! Are you going to buy it, or am I simply going to have to kill you?

92 PERCENT

TEST DRIVE II
THE COLLECTION

Publisher: Accolade
Price: £29.99
Release: Out now

At the heart of this rather inevitable compliation is *The Duel: Test Drive II*, which is a driving game (obviously) and the sequel to *Test Drive* (even more obviously). So everything's going to depend on whether or not you like *The Duel*. That's pretty obvious too. In case you're not sure, here's what it's all about and what I think of it:

Despite all the hype and general American-ness, it's actually a very straightforward driving game, in which you've got to negotiate the usual 'road' while keeping an eye open for other drivers (crash into them and you lose a life) and the police who'll give you a ticket if they catch you speeding. Part of the game's supposed appeal is the way it simulates the car you're meant to be driving right down to its acceleration curves and engine sound. *The Duel* also builds on the original *Test Drive* by allowing you to race against an additional computer-controlled car (if you want).

And is it any good? Lots of people seem to think so, but I'm not entirely convinced. The roads are certainly

***Test Drive II: The Collection*. Also known as milking a game for all it's worth. Not the best 3D driving game ever, but a perfectly respectable compilation all the same.**

impressive, especially the tunnels and cliff-edge bits. The bit-mapped graphics lead to a few spook effects, though – like if you spin off the road and end up at right-angles to it you can see all the other cars driving past sideways! And if you get close enough to another car to crash into it, it turns out actually to be a 1/32 scale replica. But the main problem is the lack of an impression of speed, something common to most of these 'old-style' driving games which is only solved by the introduction of proper 3D graphics (a la *Stunt Car Racer* and *Indy 500*). All the same, *The Duel* is probably one of the best driving games around and has plenty of devotees.

And then there are the four add-on disks. Two of these contain extra cars to supplement the original game's Ferrari F40 and Porsche 959. There's the *Muscle Cars* disk which contains five atrociously crap Sixties American 'sports' cars, and the *Supercars* disk which features things like the Lotus Esprit, the Lamborghini Countach and (oh dear) the Corvette ZR1. Strangely enough they all seem to suffer from the same wobbly steering system which, until you get used to it, means that the slightest twitch of the wheel sends you spinning off down a cliff. It also credits a 4WD Porsche with similar handling to the crap American cars (ie not much).

The scenery disks are slightly more interesting. The European one takes you through all the key countries of our beautiful continent apart from, understandably, Britain. Curiously, our friend from the LAPD crops up a lot here too. And the *California Challenge* one takes you through several US states en route for the Mexican border.

Taking into account my earlier comments, then, this is a pretty safe bet as driving games go, but a bit samey even with all the extras. The price is worrying, though. • *JONATHAN DAVIES*

THE BOTTOM LINE

***Test Drive II* with all the trimmings. The game's okay, but if you've already got it give this a miss as the trimmings don't really add up to much.**

62 PERCENT

MAGNUM:
THE COMPILATION

Publisher: Ubi Soft
Price: £25.99
Availability: Out now

So what have we here? Well, quite simply five very different action titles bundled together by France's finest bundlers of games that have got so little to do with each other they can't think of a

***RVF Honda*: jolly**

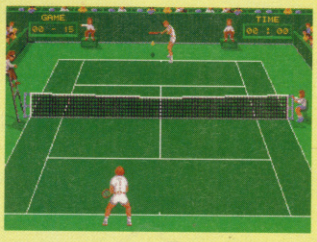
decent, all-enveloping title for the compilation...

RVF Honda – Jolly motorcyle racer with a nice line in gear changing and sound quality, originally published on MicroProse's short lived MicroStyle label. Still manages to out-manoeuvre many of the two-wheeled coin-op conversions you might have been tempted by, and subsequently proves to be enormous fun – better looking than *Super Hang On*, more playable than *Team Suzuki*, it does everything quite well without really being a major stand-

***After The War*: ropey**

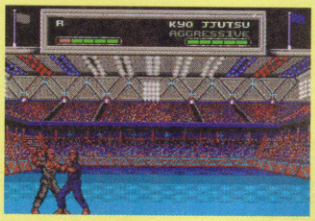
out in any particular area.

Pro Tennis Tour – Direct from the Ubi Soft stable, it's another plus sign for the compliilation – oodles of gameplay and an interesting 3D presentation make it perhaps the the best tennis game currently available. The 'tour' takes you around the world playing top seeded tennis stars until you're good enough to make it into the elite, and most will find it challenging enough to be worth coming back to again and again. Nicely timed for a re-release too, just when we're still glowing from an over-exposure of tennis games on the telly.



***Pro Tennis Tour*: nicely timed**

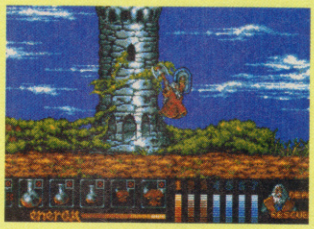
After The War – Things start to get a bit ropier around this point. This Dinamic-originated, post-apocalyptic beat-'em-up, set in and around familiar inner-city mean streets, looks good but proves rather too simple to make any real impression. There are plenty of fighting maneovres and all the usual devil dogs, punks and robots to see to too – one bit sees you touting giant guns in a scene very reminicent of *Aliens* – but really nothing out of the ordinary. Safe and entertaining enough to justify its



***Oriental Games*: bovver boy**

existence in this package, but that's about as far as it goes.

Oriental Games – Another bovver boy game but this time of a more sophisticated nature. This, the last Firebird product ever released, contains a whole bunch of martial arts – kendo (the one with sticks), karate and sumo, among others – set in some kind of Far East Olympics stadia, and as such score points for novelty value, at least. Joystick movements take some getting used, and while it suffers from typical beat-'em-up sameyness, a



***Satan*: samey**

fairly agreeable (if rather limited) experience nonetheless.

Satan – Wizards and warriors get it on in underground caverns and ancient castles. There's lots to do in this sideways scrolling arcade fantasy, and plenty to see, but all too samey for most of us. Graphics are a little out of the ordinary, but gameplay is most definitely not – in fact, much of it seems suspiciously heavily based on US Gold's *Black Tiger* coin-op conversion. *COLIN CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

A pretty decent collection, and at a nice price (just over a fiver a game), even if it lacks any real stand out products. It's a personal thing, but I find these varied, themeless compilations actually more satisfactory than straight thematic attempts – at least you're not being asked to play umpteen variations on basically the same gameplay all the time.

74 PERCENT

VIRTUAL WORLDS

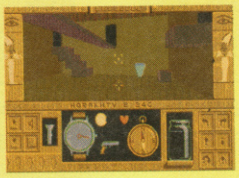
Publisher: Domark
Authors: Incentive
Price: £29.99
Release: Out now

My first experience of Freescape involved *Driller* on the Spectrum, and wasn't one I'd wish to repeat, but I have to admit they've steadily got better.

Indeed, Incentive's three 3D games have proved to be hits across all formats (although they only really come into their own on the Amiga, of course) and, I must admit, deserve it too. Freescape may not exactly be state of the art these days (you won't find yourself flying over smoothly scrolling *Hunter* landscapes, or under pressure from waves of *Cybercon III* baddies), but the atmosphere, invention and spirit of adventure Incentive have managed to incorporate into their games make up for any technical deficiencies like jerky screen updates and lack of proper animation. Good stuff, that's for sure, and – blimey! – here are all three original games (*Driller*, *Total Eclipse* and *Castle Master*) on one compilation, together with a completely new one called *The Crypt*.

The *Castle Master* adventure continues in *The Crypt*.

Spacebound, in the slightly aging 'classic' *Driller*.



***Total Eclipse*: I Sphinx therefore I am Freescape.**

***Castle Master* shows how effective Freescape can be.**

Driller's first, chronologically speaking, and already you're a planet's only hope of survival. You've got to save it by driving a probe around one of its moons, collecting energy crystals and drilling for gas. There's a flying thing you can use too, if you can find it, and fearsome defences to watch out for. Following that is *Total Eclipse*, which is similar but kicks off in Egypt, outside a pyramid. It's the Earth that needs saving this time, so you've got to go into the pyramid and not come out until you've destroyed a shrine to stop some curse or other. There's a very Egyptian feel to it, but don't expect all the locations to look as nice as the first one.

Castle Master makes substantial improvements over the first two games. The puzzles are a lot more varied thanks to the addition of an 'action' key which means you can move things, eat things and open things whereas before you could only shoot them. It also cuts down a bit on the large number 'sudden deaths' that made the others slightly annoying. Having said that, you've still got to be pretty careful, though.

And then there's *The Crypt*, a completely new game, though showing less of an advance over previous Freescape than the others did. It carries on from where *Castle Master* left off – you're trapped in a *Crypt*, having failed to defeat the baddy in *Castle Master*, and you're obviously quite keen to escape. Luckily there are lots of keys lying around, but you'll have to solve puzzles to get them. Watch out for all the scary coffins, too. It might be a bit smaller, but it's just as good as *Castle Master* and so therefore a bit of a must.

So Domark have got you by the short and curlies, really. If you haven't tried Freescape before you've absolutely got to buy Virtual Worlds, no doubt about it – there's a big chunk of gaming history here alright. And if you have, well, this is the only way you're going to be able to get *The Crypt*, isn't it? It just goes to show what you could achieve with *3D Construction Kit if* you put your mind (and fifty quid) to it. • *JONATHAN DAVIES*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Measured in hours of playing time per pound, this one has 'essential purchase' stamped all over it. In red.

87 PERCENT

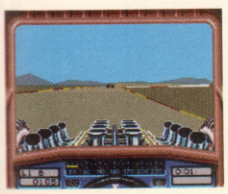
VIRTUAL REALITY 1

Publisher: Elite
Price: £34.99
Availability: Out now

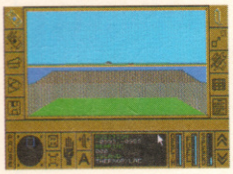
Elite have gone for the 'grand old men' approach with five fairly creaky but undeniably classic solid 3D games in one package at a not entirely attractive price. If you already own two or three of these games you'd have to think twice, but for new Amiga owners this is an almost unmissable colpilation. I mean, just look at the pedigree...

Stunt Car Racer – Geoff Crammond's two-and-a-bit-year-old high powered 3D driving sim puts you in a , erm, 'stunt car', on a selection of elevated courses peppered with nasty turns, stomach churning drops and suicidal leaps. One mistake and you're flipped over the edge of the elevated, roller-coaster like track – the only problem with the game really, as by the time you're winched back on any race will be as good as lost.

Quite possibly the most original driving game ever, it's important to get your driving skills just perfect before tackling the impressive computer opponents – this is one of those rare games that's actually as much fun in practice mode as in a real race – while a two Amiga link-up option for taking on pals proves to be the ultimate fun. Quite simply, *Stunt Car* is still one of the best – if not the best – games of its genre, and a worthy number 10 in our All-Time Top 100 Games. The only downside is that compilation makers seem to have started regarding this as a bit of a banker, and it's starting to make more appearances than Michael Caine.

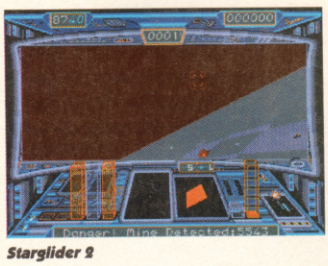


Stunt Car Racer



Carrier Command

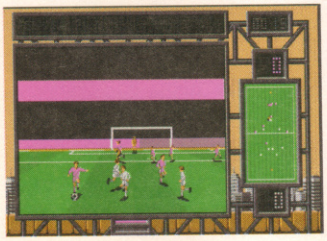
Midwinter – Another golden oldie but, again, well worth a look – interest in it should be at a peak, with the sequel (*Flames Of Freedom*) just weeks away from release. Here we have a huge mish-mash of strategy and action with a multitude of screens, options, characters and vehicles – Mike Singelton has updated his old *Lords Of Midnight* idea, but this time set in a JG Ballard-like post apocalyptic world, and it almost works.



Starglider 2

Certainly this arcade/adventure-style tale of near-future freedom fighters defending their frozen island from a tin-pot dictator looks impressive – if only it didn't have so many ludicrous gameplay flaws. Despite problems though, it still made our Top 100 – at number 66.

Carrier Command – Not surprisingly, this places you in command of a futuristic aircraft carrier, on a mission to take control of a group of islands and eventually defeat an enemy carrier lurking somewhere about. This game – part flight sim, part tank sim, part strategy game and wholey original – has proved a massive influence on all sorts of games (even if it hasn't spawned all that many direct imitators) and remains an all-time classic three years on. Slightly slow and dated looking nowadays you might say, but undeniably still a classic – something confirmed by its number 15 (15!) placing in our All-Time Top 100.



International Soccer Challenge

Starglider 2 – Another one from Arganaut Software and possibly (just possibly) the best of the bunch. It's a lush 3D space adventure starring oodles of enemy ships, more planets and moons than you could hope to explore, various odd bits of space wildlife and a delicious line in space pirates. It's the sort of game that people live inside, and, once you've got the hang of it, it's hard not to get sucked in – definitely a game due a critical rethink, especially as Empire's largely similar *Eye Of The Storm*, programmed by some of the same people, is due soon.

Midwinter

International Soccer Challenge – Oh dear. This is where the compilation lets itself down – this MicroProse soccer sim (sequel to *MicroProse Soccer*) what with its first player perspective and lovely 3D-ness, was originally billed as a real advance for the genre, but in practice proved to be a huge yawn. It's far too easy, and the sound (in particular) is abysmal. Time we skipped straight past it really, and got to... • *COLIN CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Ignoring the footie game, a quite incredible compilation – there's enough gameplay in here to keep you going for months, with some of these unadulterated classics. At £7 a game this is a must for anyone who hasn't had the chance to explore these landmark – the only downer really has to be the high price. You may be better off buying the four true 3D games as they become available as stand alone budget releases instead.

83 PERCENT

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PD

This month's speedy little explanation on 'Just what is this PD business anyway?' for people who still aren't quite sure: PD, or Public Domain, is free software basically, stuff which nobody holds the copyright on. That means you can do what you like with it – copy it, give it to your pals, stick it on a magazine cover disk, even start your own PD library, compiling whatever bits you see fit to cram onto a disk and then selling it for a nominal postage, packing and duplication fee. That's why you'll see some of the same programs crop up in different combinations on different disks all the time – there are an awful lot of people out there distributing PD in all sorts of ways, which they're perfectly entitled to do as long as they don't a) change it or b) charge for the actual program itself. Shareware (where you are asked to make a contribution to the author if you like the program), Exclusiveware (which is similar to PD but only comes from one library and actually earns the author a cut of the profits) and Licenceware (where the author retains copyright – so it's not really anything like PD at all) are extensions of the same thing. Your host is, as ever, Mr Stuart Campbell. (One final thing: the addresses we print on these pages are merely where we got our disks from. There are plenty of other places too – check the adverts. One of the joys of PD is that it's so cheap that you can afford to take a risk and order something you know absolutely nothing about. Nine times out of ten you'll be more than pleasantly surprised).

RATINGS: ★★★★★ Excellent ★★★★★ Nearly there ★★★★ Very good ★★★ Has its moments ★★ Flawed ★ Dire

SPECCY EMULATOR

VIRUS FREE PD

After the amazing success of some of the 8-bit conversions we've seen recently (*Frantic Freddie*, *Gridrunner*, *Pharaoh's Curse*), I was well excited when this dropped through the letterbox. Coming with 15 classic Speccy games on the disk, everything looked set for hours of colour-clashing fun and larks. What I actually got was, well, hours of sitting around. This program emulates the Spectrum perfectly, but there's one drawback. For some

***Moon Alert* gets emulated, Speccy-style.**

unfathomable reason, Commodore's state-of-the-art 16-bit baby just can't keep up with Sinclair's 10-year-old rubber-keyed dinosaur. In fact, it runs at something under half the speed, and that's if you switch the interrupts and colour off. This makes playing any of the games to all intents and purposes impossible, and relegates the emulator from the realms of something potentially incredible into the pure novelty value stakes. The Amiga CAN emulate a Spectrum, as Software Projects' old-style conversion of *Manic Miner* shows, but I suspect that was a complete re-write of the game, rather than an attempt to go through the ROM-copy route. I'd love to see some old Speccy games running on the Amiga, but this isn't the way to do it.

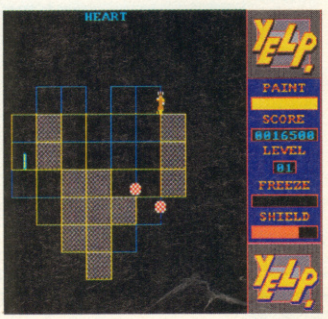
VERDICT: **An almost-brilliant program, completely scuppered by the immense slowness of the actual emulation. Okay as a novelty, but completely unusable in practice.**
★

YELP

Start

This is another variation on the *Painter* theme (similar to the wonderful *Drip*, reviewed in issue two), but this time much closer to the original idea. You control a paintbrush, running around a grid and trying to fill squares with colour by enclosing them with painted lines. There are various baddies running around trying to stop you by stealing your paint and getting in the way generally, and a few power-up doobries to help you out. There's really not much else to say, except that it's smooth and fast, there are lots of screens and a couple of difficulty levels to test yourself on. If *Painter* is your kind of thing then this'll be, er, your kind of thing.

VERDICT: Enjoyable enough clone – not quite in the same league as *Drip* but still perfectly respectable entertainment.
★★★

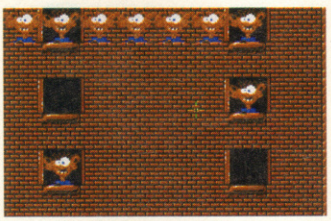


No undercoat required in *Yelp*.

LAMER EXTERMINATOR

Seventeen Bit

This is the kind of game you usually get for free when you buy a light gun. Little faces appear in the windows of a variety of buildings and you have to shoot them. If you let one go, or shoot and miss, you lose a life, and when nine lives are gone it's Game Over time. This makes for very short and sweet games, and it's ideal fun when you've got a few friends round and you fancy a quick spot of competition. Not being able to see your score after you die knocks that idea on the head a bit, and



***LE* – plenty of violence for your 89p.**

the, er, limited nature of the game makes it a real drag if you're playing on your own, but 89p is a fair enough price for the amount of fun you'll get out of it.

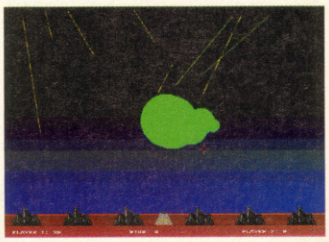
VERDICT: Simple throwaway fun of the kind that PD does best. A chuckle with some chums, but not worth bothering about by yourself. ★★

MISSILE COMMAND

Start

Actually, forget *Missile Command*. Or don't, because it's a quite acceptable (if a touch basic) copy of the venerable coin-op, it's just that it's probably the least remarkable thing on this disk. So what's the competition? Well for a start, the disk also features *Amoeba Invaders*, the wonderful conversion of the grandaddy of video games that we gave you on our issue three cover disk. Then there's *Girl Actions*, a pretty average *Galaxians* clone which is nonetheless remarkable for the completely heinous pun in its title. You can also find *Maze Game*, which as well as having another remarkable title (if for different reasons) has to be the most unfathomable 3D maze game I've ever seen (and I've seen plenty, believe me) and *Bally 2*, the sequel to the PD *Qix* game *Bally* (get away...) which is remarkable for being, as far as I can see, COMPLETELY IDENTICAL to the first version. Finally, the disk features *Think Ahead*, a one or two-player board/mind game which calls for some major strategy and tactics, especially against the computer and is, on the whole, remarkably challenging. Oh, and of course there's the rather lovely professional presentation of the whole thing, with pretty intro screens and a user-friendly menu system. Nope, I'm afraid in the 'remarkable' stakes, *Missile Command* just doesn't cut it. Good game, though.

VERDICT: Remarkably interesting disk containing lots of remarkably remarkable stuff. A bit of a mixed bag, but still a remarkably good buy. ★★★★



Nostalgia trip 237 – *Missile Command*.

PD

who've already got *Tiles* can still get a slightly different challenge in the same vein, without having to get the same thing twice for the sake of nicer graphics. The disk also features a not-bad *Tetris* clone called *Quattro*, the follow-up *Welltrix* (reviewed in issue three), and a couple of other games besides, making it an excellent buy for puzzle fans.

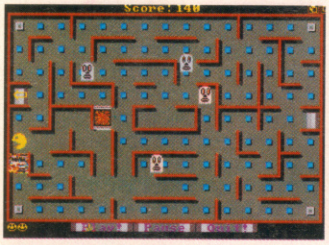
VERDICT: Three really good puzzlers and a couple of arcade games thrown in for good measure. ★★★★

PACMAN 87

Byteback

A curious title for this reworking of the arcade maze classic that I've only noticed appearing in PD listings quite recently, but maybe I'm just not very observant. In any case, *Pacman 87* differs from the coin-op game in a few ways, the biggest one being that it takes place over a number of different mazes, and you don't have to clear all the dots from each one before you can move onto another. The mazes also include the occasional deadly trap, but that's basically it as far as new features go. As for the actual game, the maze-changing is confusing, the ghosts are pretty dumb, the death traps are random and annoying, and basically all the charm of the original game is lost, leaving a fairly dull maze-trekking affair that's just a bit too 'advanced' for its own good. I guess sometimes the simpler things in life ARE the best. Then again, if it really was written in 1987 you can't really knock it, though for 1991 it's not much fun.

VERDICT: Pretty poor *PacMan* variant that's too unfocussed to be very entertaining.
★★

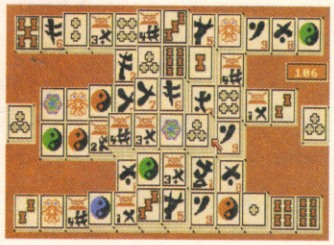


***PacMan* – the game that launched a thousand rip-offs. And here's another.**

CHINA CHALLENGE

Byteback

After the success of *Tiles* (the *Shanghai* clone we gave away on our issue three cover disk alongside *Amoeba Invaders*), what should come along but this, another variation on the same theme. *China Challenge* differs from *Tiles* in two main ways. One is that it's all a bit slicker – with prettier graphics, more speed, and more of the original game's frills (like nested move retraction) – and the other is that it doesn't actually feature the original tile layout. This is in fact a good thing, as it means people



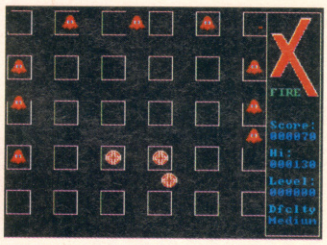
***China Challenge* – gameplay *Shanghai*-ed from an Activision title.**

XFIRE

Byteback

This game bears a few similarities to a really ancient arcade game called *Targ*, but without all the complicated stuff (little joke there for *Targ* fans). You appear in a square maze full of little square buildings, from which bad guys looking not unlike *PacMan* monsters pop out and shoot at you. The object of the game is to shoot them first. Extra features include, um... well, as it happens there aren't extra features at all. Not that the simplicity makes it easy – the small screen area means you've never got a spare second to catch a breath, as there's always a bullet or several coming at you from one direction or another. Add to that the fact that you can only stand still when you're at a junction and you have an extremely demanding little game. The graphics are functional but the music is really quite groovy, and with several other games on the disk, including yet another good *Painter* game and a *Frogger*, this is another great deal for cheapie fans.

VERDICT: A tough and addictive game which doesn't suffer from being just about the simplest thing I've ever seen. ★★★



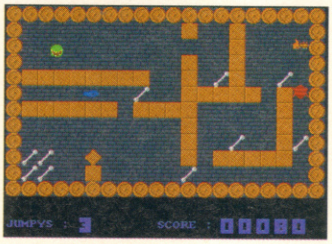
***XFire* – he most primitive PD game yet?**

JUMPY

Start (disk Games Galore 6)

And talking of tough... *Jumpy* is a pretty basic platform game, putting you in control of an extremely bouncy rubber ball with a mission to collect bones (?) from a series of screens simply swarming with evil enemies and perplexing platform patterns (sorry about that, by the way). It's a deviously designed game, and you'll need to be blessed with a fairly calm disposition if you're not going to end up putting your foot through the screen in frustration. Still, if it gets too much, you can always try your hand at one of the eight other games on the disk, including a *Breakout* clone, an air traffic control simulator, a tiny little Workbench baseball game, a space shoot-'em-up and an intriguing board game called *Raps*, which is basically a much cut-down draughts-like game involving some serious tactical thinking for something so slight. It's one of the most fascinating little snippets of PD I've come across, and together with all the other stuff makes the disk too much of a bargain to miss.

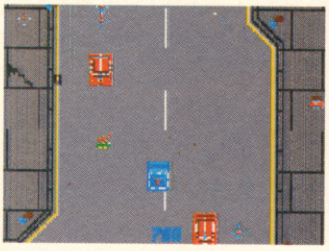
VERDICT: A wide-ranging mix of games, all of which are at least presentable and a couple of which are very good. Yet another PD bargain.



Bouncing around the rather simplistic, but nonetheless challenging, screens of *Jumpy*.

SCUM HATERS

Amiganuts



Imagine Knight Rider with genocidal tendencies, and you've got *Scum Haters*.

Another *Shoot-'Em-Up Construction Kit* effort, this vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up (now there's a shocker) sets you behind the wheel of a car cruising through East London on a mission to shoot absolutely everything with the temerity to be occupying the same streets as you, and a few trains into the bargain. It's a bit trickier than it looks at first glance, and there's enough variation in the scenery to keep you interested in getting just a little bit further into it. There are some nice touches of the kind more usually seen in professional software, but particularly sensitive kiddies should watch out for the exclamation your driver emits when a life is lost. *Scum Haters* isn't going to change your life at all, but it's worth a look for the title alone.

VERDICT: Enjoyable little blaster that'll keep you playing for a bit longer than you might initially think.
★★★

STOP PRESS: *XFire* is given away on this month's cover disk. Hurrah!

THE ADVENTURES OF NORRIS

Virus Free

Another game in Virus Free's 'Exclusiveware' series of non-PD, *Norris* is a platform game in the style of *Jet Set Willy*, involving much jumping around, collecting keys, and avoiding bad guys. It's very pretty, and certainly a big step up from the last Exclusiveware effort (the pretty hopeless *X-System*), but there's still a bit lacking for it to justify the trumpeting and dire anti-copying warnings adorning the front end. The music is particularly dreadful, and the game is perhaps just a little dull and uninvolving. Having said that, it's still well up to the quality of most PD stuff, and probably the best game in this particular genre available in the general area of PD. A bit of a spark would have helped it no end, but for three quid it's far from a bad buy.

VERDICT: Not all that lively, but slick and quite distracting for a while at least. Still, it should have been released as proper PD without all the faffing around. ★★★

There's no denying it – *Norris* has rather gorgeous graphics for a piece of (almost) PD.

Contact addresses for this month's games: VIRUS FREE PD, 23 Elborough Road, Moredon, Swindon, Wilts SN2 2LS ☎ 0793 512321 • AMIGANUTS UNITED, 169 Dale Valley Road, Hollybrook, Southampton SO1 6QX ☎ 0703 785680 • SOFTVILLE PD, Unit 5, Stratfield Park, Elettra Avenue, Waterlooville, Hants, PO7 7XN ☎ 0705 266509 • START COMPUTER SYSTEMS, 20 Holmside, Sunderland, SR1 3JE ☎ 091 565 2605 • SEVENTEEN BIT SOFTWARE, PO Box 97, Wakefield WF1 1XX ☎ 0924 366982 BYTEBACK, 6 Mumby Close, Newark, Notts NG24 1JE ☎ 0636 79097

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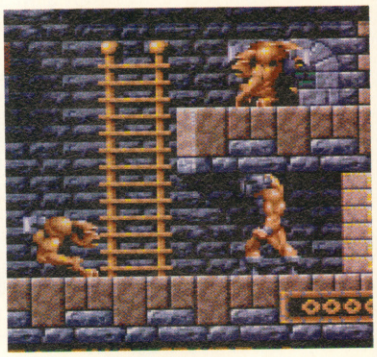

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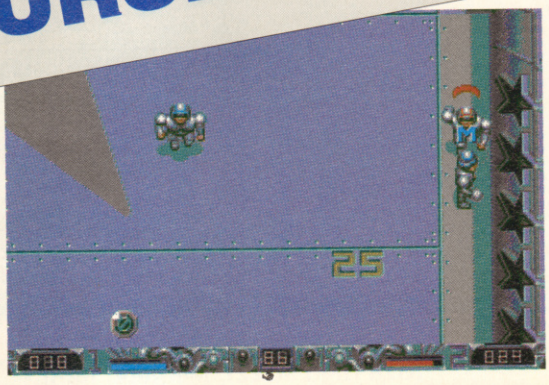

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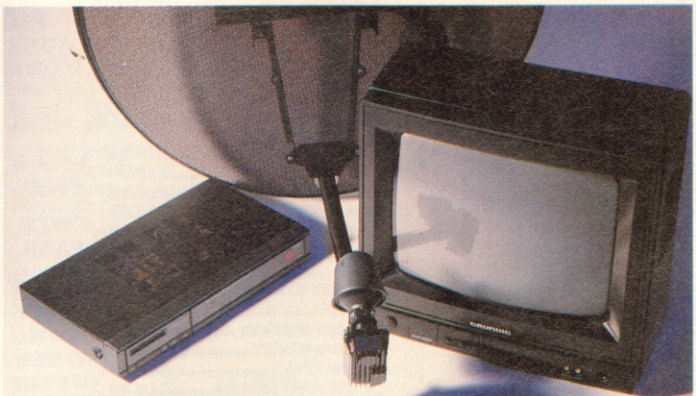

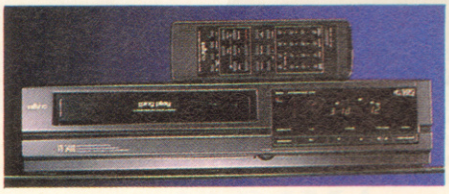

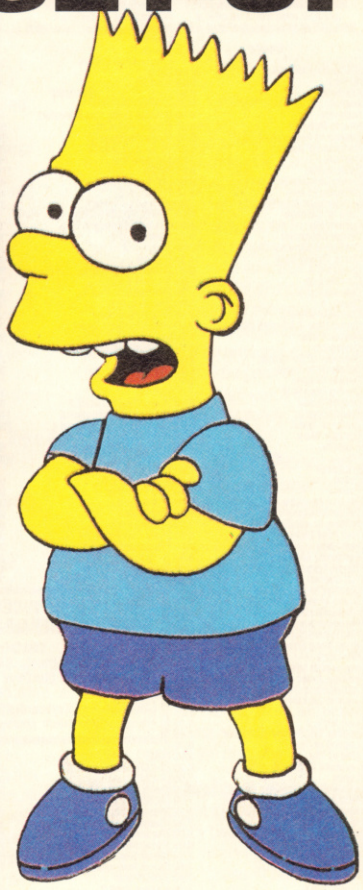

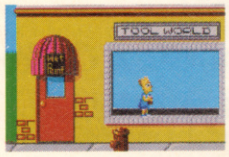

'Hands off, these are mine man!'

It's a pretty nifty looking prize, eh? Not only do you get a Grundig colour TV, complete with an 15 inch screen and remote control, you get a Saisho video recorder and a Ferguson satellite dish thrown in too! The complete set up is worth a massive £800 and is sitting here in the office just itching to be won by some lucky reader.

But why the generosity? What are we celebrating? Well, simply this – the release of Ocean's version of *The Simpsons* (or *The Simpsons – Bart Versus The Space Mutants*, to give it its full title), as sure-fire a contender for all-formats Christmas Number One as you could possibly hope for. Check out the review earlier in this issue for complete details (it's actually a very characterful and appealing scrolling shoot-'em-up cum cutesy game) because it's all but certainly going to be one of the most talked about games of the year – not only is it going to be bought in its droves as a stand alone product, it's also the star of Commodore's new Cartoon Classics A500 pack (so thousands of new Amiga owners will get a copy). Now, with our prize, you can REALLY have *The Simpsons* coming out of your ears – not only can you play the game with your Amiga linked up to your new TV, you can check out Bart's cartoon antics on the B Sky B television show too!

So what do I have to do?

We want you to write us a new Bart Simpson rap, in the style of the chart topping 'Do The Bartman'. We've given you the opening lines – now just complete the verse (or go on for longer if you're feeling particularly inspired). Extra points MAY be given for any 'witty' references you can get in there to Ocean, the AMIGA POWER 'posse' or, indeed, anything with a vague game relevance (but we're not guaranteeing anything). We fully expect to be reading thousands of these Bart-style raps over the next few weeks, so you're going to have to be either a) incredibly witty and clever or b) unbelievably (and excruciatingly) bad to get a look in.

The rhyme begins: **'Yo, hey dudes, what's happening, man?**
This here's young Bart's master plan...'

(Hey, we never said we'd give you much to go on!)

So, get scribbling! Send your entries, filled out on the back of a postcard or envelope (or on a separate piece of paper INSIDE an envelope if it's particularly long) to: It Wasn't Me (Nobody Saw Me Do It And You Can't Prove Anything) Compo, Amiga Power, 29 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon, BA1 2BW. Remember to include your name and address, and be sure to get your entry in before September 30th!

RULES AND REGULATIONS

- **The closing date for this is September 30th. After that, it's Wastebin City.**
- **The editor's decision is absolutely, completely and utterly final.**
- **Employees of Future Publishing and Ocean are not eligible to enter this competition.**

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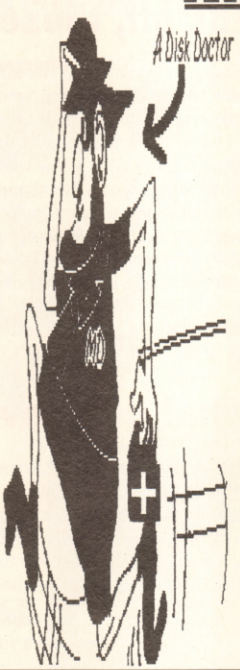

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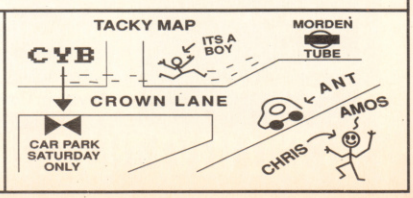

Well, we asked for it. 'Send us fewer letters of praise,' we said. 'Let's hear from people who've really got something to complain about.' And we did. (We should have kept our big mouths shut really, shouldn't we?). Hold on tight then, as we take a two page journey into the land of the miserable, the confused and the just plain angry...

DO THE write THING

● **Address your letters to AMIGA POWER, Beaufort Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon, BA1 2BW**

Dear AMIGA POWER,

I am writing concerning the way you seem to be marking games. I've compared your scoring of 10 randomly picked games to the reviews of the same 10 games in Amiga Format, which I'm sure you know is also made by Future Publishing, and it makes for quite interesting reading. The 10 games and marks were as follows *(There followed a long and uninteresting list of 10 games which we – shock horror! – didn't mark exactly the same as Amiga Format. Ed).*

Average: Amiga Format 80 per cent, AMIGA POWER 69 per cent.

So I have to ask myself, who am I to trust? I realise that each reviewer is entitled to his own opinions but what are you telling the people who buy these games? I mean, I myself could easily find a good game, say it's bad (which I may well think to be true), print this in an international magazine and thus prevent the game from being bought.

Looking at the two magazines' marks for *Quest For Glory II: Trial By Fire* – which were very different indeed – I feel that some sort of system is needed to ensure the mark for each game is as accurate as possible. Here is what I suggest: along with the statements in 'Who Do We Think We Are?' you should put a word or two showing which type of game that reviewer prefers, and an example – probably his favourite. Then, after The Bottom Line, you should put what each reviewer gives the game. This way there would be much less arguing and no letters such as this.

As another example, just look at the review of *Brat*. There was a 19 percent difference between Stuart Campbell's overall mark and Matt Bielby's – and it appeared to be mainly due to the fact that one liked the way the main character was portrayed and the other didn't. The thing about different reviewers' opinions becomes really noticeable here; after all, does the look of the hero affect the mark THAT much?

Apart from this I think the magazine is great, and hopefully you'll think about my idea, or another similar.

Yours faithfully,

Gerred Blyth, Bath.

Make your mind up, Gerred! First you want lots of different reviewers marks on every game, then when we do exactly that (on Brat*), you actually complain about the difference!*

There are two things to bear in mind here really:

1) Despite the fact that there's only one mark and one name on most reviews, we all see every game that comes into the office and the score tends to represent a broad consensus of our opinions. If any of us strongly disagrees with the main reviewer's mark, we use an 'On The Other Hand..' box, but, as you'll have noticed, that isn't very often. Usually everyone here will agree to within a couple of percent how good a game is – to be honest, most of the time it's just plain obvious.

2) We're all getting a little bit bored of people complaining that we give games different marks to Amiga Format. We're a different magazine, produced by a completely different set of people, and there's no reason whatsoever why we should have the same opinions as them. (Though if you read both magazines you'll see that most of the time we actually do pretty much agree – it's just that we tend to use a wider range of marks than they do, dipping right down into the twenties and below). If it's total conformity you want, why not buy two copies of the same magazine?

The indicating what sort of game each reviewer likes is a good idea though – that's why we're now doing exactly that on the 'Just Who Do We Think We Are?' page.

Dear Amiga Power,

I am writing to complain about the appalling mark for *3D Construction Kit*. Sadly I missed the main review of it but seeing The Bottom Line in the July edition I was amazed at the three stars you gave it! It should have had five black stars at least! In The Bottom Line you said 'making anything worthwhile gets very complicated'. What a load of rubbish! Methinks that you have just flicked through the manual! I'm far from a programmer and find the easiest of programs hard, but already I've mastered 90 percent of the Freescape Command Language and the Animation Controller is a cinch!

You probably think that I am some kind of whizz kid who enjoys constructing tangents and loves bisecting angles, but, using *3D Construction Kit*, creating 3D objects (or even 2D for detail) is easy! So the price is hefty, but it's ideal for a birthday or Crimbo present. If there's any justice there should be hundreds of 3D PD games (yes, you can make your own game autobooting and can share it!). My only gripe is that this kit is unsuitable for young children and don't expect to make a *Castle Master* clone in a day (it takes at least a fortnight!). And that's not all – if you get stuck with it there's a brilliant club where like-minded people can get together and share the techniques, and there's also a helpline! There, is that enough for you?

Whoever reviewed it should be dragged out into the street and shot! Right, now I'm off to do a bit more design work on *3D Construction Kit*! Addictive? It should carry a health warning!

Yours constructively,

Andrew (3D Fan) Herbert, Stockport.

P.S. I know you won't print this!

Are you sure about this dragging the reviewer out into the street and shooting him business? For the record, the guilty 3D Construction Kit *reviewer (Jonathan Davies) said, amongst other things, it's 'a pretty potent piece of software'; 'there's something for everyone'; it 'achieves what it set out to do very well'; 'the only limit is your imagination'; 'it's very flexible, and once you've worked out what's going on it should theoretically be possible to program just about anything' and it's 'an investment that'll really pay off in terms of enjoyment per pound'. Hardly a slamming, I think you'll agree, especially when he marked it at 80 percent – very high in AMIGA POWER terms. (What a pity you missed the original review, eh?)*

Oh, and by the way, from now on, any letter which includes the words 'I know you won't print this' will be consigned immediately to the bin. It's a completely knobby thing to write and there's nothing big or hard or clever or grown-up about it at all.

Dear Gary Penn,

Hmmm...Okay, here we go. I think you are the best games reviewer in the gaming industry and you are really cool! Phew! Now I have expressed my feelings we can get down to the nitty gritty. But before that, there are a few questions I need to put to your expert brain:

(a) Has Stuart Campbell ever had any hair (he looks a tad queer), and

(b) Is Andy Ide Jewish?

Right, I was very impressed with the first, second and third issues of AMIGA POWER (and I thought Amiga Format was good!!) and I am continuing to get my dad to dish out the wad for it. At last the Amiga has a games magazine with style! My mum took one look at the use of 'crap' and 'bloody hell' and went off muttering about 'not for his age group' (I'm only 12!), but – hey! – it's got more action than crappy 'Prima', 'Best', 'Bella', 'Woman' or 'Chat' (which she gets) and has less swear words and sex scandals than all the sex novels she gets. I especially liked the reviews on *Exile*, *Deuteros* and The Bottom Line at the back. I also enjoy playing *Kid Gloves*, *Bombuzal*, and the demo of *Exile*. I would be grateful for some tips.

Matt Bielby is cool.

Stuart Campbell is a prat.

Andy Ide is, well...all right.

The rest are cool as well.

Please print the letter as I think loads of people are stuck on *Exile*.

Yours hmmedly,

Chris Milkins, Dartford.

P.S. Stuart Campbell is a loss.

Erm, quite.

Dear AMIGA POWER,

I wish that everyone would get off Stuart Campbell's back. He gives harsh marks, but so what?! With him doing this at least I know that a game is really going to be excellent when he gives it a high score.

I also feel obliged to enter the great cover-mounted disk debate. I simply don't see what harm they can do. I know I speak as a keen gamesplayer but – hey! – surely cover mounts would mean that the quality of software on sale would rise.

Let me explain. If software developers realise that they are going to have to compete with cover mounted games then they will be given the incentive to make their game the best available. Such a move would cut down on the crap that is currently on the market. It may also mean the end of your 'Oh dear...' slot, fun as it is, but that's really little great loss, is it?

Michael Biddle, Leamingtom Spa.

Sorry, Michael, but your argument doesn't actually make much sense. If magazines are putting high quality games on their covers – things like Bombuzal *or* Interphase *(Amiga Format) – for software house to, as you say, 'compete' with cover mounted disks they're going to have to make sure that every product they bring out is of a quality higher than that! Erm, how? At the very least your scenario would mean 90 percent of todays product wouldn't be released at all, simply because it wouldn't be good enough to compete with these top-notch freebies, and you wouldn't want that surely, would you?*

Dear Amiga Power,

I would like to congratulate Lucasfilm Games for probably the best end screens to any game to date with their conclusion to *The Secret Of Monkey Island*. It is clear to see that this was done by a film company. If only others would follow suit, games would be worth completing. I wait with baited breath for the follow-up and more of the same.

J.A. 'Jaws' Wilson, Berwick Upon Tweed.

Fans of end of game sequences will be pleased to know that we're working on a feature on just that subject for a future issue – quite possibly the next one.

Dear Amiga Power,

I have just bought the July issue of your magazine, mostly because the coverdisk looked so good. When I got it home, I stuck it in the disk drive, chose *Frantic Freddie* and got a nasty surprise. For a start there was no game to play, just loads of writing from 'DR. FX'. As if this wasn't enough, I was greeted by a number of swear words.

If this is what you, AMIGA POWER, call 'The Best Of PD' then I feel very sorry for you. As in reference to Mr. Palmer who said of June's issue, 'I hope I don't have to censor the next edition before my children can read it'. Well, you no longer have to worry about the magazine – it's the disks that cause the problems!

Come on AMIGA POWER, get your act together and stop using such filth. This is meant to be a family magazine, not one that needs censoring before you can give it to a young child. Don't get me wrong, I am not condemning the use of swearing in its rightful place, but when I spend £2.95 of my pocket money on a magazine, I don't expect to be sworn at. At 15 years of age I hear enough of this language anyway.

Please don't do this again.

Yours sincerely,

Tania Dodd, Colchester.

Hundreds of apologies for the swearing that appears on the front end screen of Frantic Freddie. *The problem is this: the swearing only appears if you sit and watch the programmer's immensely dull scrolling message for about five minutes instead of pressing a mouse button to actually start →*

DO THE write THING

the game. If you'd actually done that and started playing this incredibly fun (and foul-language free) platform and ladders romp you wouldn't have seen the message at all and thus wouldn't be offended – in fact, we ourselves didn't see it until we'd already gone quite a long way towards putting the game on the disk. That left us with a dilemma – should we run with the game as it is (remember, you aren't allowed to modify PD programs in any way, so we couldn't have taken the swearing out) or should we drop it, and thus deny thousands of readers the pleasure of playing one of the best little PD games in ages? You know what we went with. What IS our fault though is that we forgot to mention that you have to press a mouse button to start the game – it honestly didn't occur to us, as it seemed patently obvious that this was what you should do, but we should have made it clearer, and for that we apologise sincerely. We'll try even harder to make sure it doesn't happen again.

Dear AMIGA POWER,

Firstly, may I congratulate you on your brilliant section concerning the ins and outs of *Rainbow Islands*, showing each item and their effects to the full. After reading this two part article, I actually found out what the whole game was all about – how very different to the few sentences in the original instructions!

But now from the praise to the groans which I feel mainly concern your '100 Games Of All Time'. Starting from number one, I was happy to read the aforementioned game taking pride of place, though I wouldn't personally say it should have ranked tops (whatever happened to Electronic Arts' *Wasteland*?) Then *Lemmings* appeared at number two, which again is one of those completely ludicrous games that once loaded proves impossible to turn off! And so I read on, nodding accordingly to titles such as *Speedball 2* and *Sim City*, when suddenly – Cough! Whoops! Err? Excuse me? – what game should rear its flamin' head than one that I'm ashamed to own for my computer. Yes, none other than your number seven, *Kick Off 2*.

This is probably the worst software purchase I've made ever! It's just so undoubtedly stupid beyond stupidness that I've had serious (very serious) thoughts of formatting the disk and using it to put saved games on from other products, such as the excellent *Powermonger*. (Talking of which, shouldn't *Powermonger* be placed higher than *Populous*? I think so).

Reading further dragged me into hysterical fits of laughter. *Spindizzy Worlds*? I mean, come on – the idea might have been great when VIC-20s were all the rage, but in 1991? Unfortunately I had the 'privilege' of playing the original *Spindizzy* on the C64 and thought it was crap then – despite what would have been called excellent graphics. I must say it took a good 10 minutes to compose myself to continue reading, then what should happen but for me to come across, at number 51, *Wings*! This had got to be untrue! I know, I know, there's disk swapping left, right and centre, but if you're

Dear Sir,

In response to your All-Time Top 100 Games, here're my All-Time Top 20 WORST Amiga Games...

1) **Kick Off 2** – I've a horrible feeling that about a month before this, er, thing was released, all the games mag writers in the world had a huge meeting and decided to play a trick on the game playing public by writing silly and thoroughly over-enthusiastic reviews about it. It is, in reality, a complete disgrace. At first I thought I was doing something wrong because the ball was bouncing all over the place as if on some kind of ping pong table, but no – it's meant to be like that. Dire.

2) **Turbo OutRun** – The arcade classic makes it onto the Amiga, though where it went in between remains a mystery because this is monumentally abysmal. If we ignore the haphazard, jerky graphics, the painful music, the relentless 'hmm' that the 'car' spews out, its ability to glide through buildings and trees, the laughable repetition and the fact that this is one of the worst EVER coin-op conversions, *Turbo OutRun* is, indeed, a damn fine game.

3) **Zombi** – Hailed as 'a massive arcade adventure', *Zombi* is actually 'a massive pile of crap.' Ubi Soft have tried to combine an arcade game with an adventure, and it's very boring and rather pointless. The whole thing is just awful.

4) **Plexu** – Oh dear, the less said about this the better. if you don't believe me, try it yourself or read the Amiga Format review, which gave it one of their lowest marks ever, 21 percent. A complete and utter disaster.

5) **Gremlins 2** – If you want to spend five minutes sitting in front of your monitor doing next to nothing, why don't you load up *Gremlins 2*? You won't be disappointed.

6) **Atomino** – I love a good puzzle game. A shame, then, I had the misfortune to play this nonsense. The only good points are it's got lots and lots of levels, boring though they are, and it's got 'Psygnosis' on the front.

7) **Beast Busters** – Well, the coin-op was pretty awful, and the Amiga version is sadly much worse. If you're tempted to play it more than three times I'll be more than a little surprised because this is seriously unentertaining. About as two-dimensional as the receipt you'll hopefully get with it. (Hang onto the receipt by the way, you'll need it).

8) **Skull And Crossbones** – 'Whatever you do,' warns Domark, 'don't show it to your grandmother!' My advice is not to show it to ANYONE (unless, of course, you enjoy being laughed at).

9) **Gravity** – '*Gravity* almost made the Top 100, but not quite,' AMIGA POWER cautiously warns its readers. This is a cunningly concealed code which means, 'If you buy *Gravity* you are guaranteed to waste lots of time and money.'

10) **Ghouls'n'Ghosts** – I'm a platform freak myself, so I thought I might like this – but no. The graphics were very poor, the sound annoying and the gameplay itself dull and ultimately non-existent (because I haven't played it since).

11) **Archipelagos** – Now don't get me wrong – I can see why many people like this. It may have very, very slow and poorly updated 3D graphics, repetitive gameplay and dreadful sound, but – hey! – many people like that sort of thing! 'A genuine 3D classic?' It's about as classic as *Kick Off 2*!

12) **Bombuzal** – Oh dear. I may well make myself very unpopular with the AP lads but I have to come clean. To be fair, the graphics are cute (but only in the unplayable 3D mode), and the sound effects are nice, but the controls are just an incy wincy bit over-sensitive (by a mere several hundred times) and the lack of in-game music seems crazy.

13) **Moonwalker** – Read the 'Oh dear...' in issue three for the full run-down on all this game's bad points – for me, the mind-boggling animation just has to rate amongst the worst ever. It's even worse than *Quest For Glory II*.

14) **Dick Tracy** – Clearly very little (and I mean VERY little) time was put into designing this hopeless shoot-'em-up. There's no two ways about this – it's really very stinky and should be avoided at ALL costs.

15) **Exile** – We all know about Gary Penn and the dog food, but I'm convinced he's a bit of a dipsomaniac – he must have drunk a ton of whisky before writing this review. The graphics are very 8-bit esque and the game lacks action. I bet Audiogenic couldn't believe it when it saw such a rave review in the best selling Amiga games magazine, normally so brilliantly critical. I have great respect for you Gary, but stay off the alcohol mate.

16) **Monty Python** – Sadly only worth buying for the manual. The graphics are not very colourful for a cute platform game, but I could have lived with this if the game itself had been any good. Frankly, it's just too hard to be addictive.

17) **Warzone** – Core let themselves down with this scrolling shoot-'em-up that's just too repetitive to be any good. The crass overhead 3D view doesn't really help at all, but it's the monotonous gameplay that kills it after the first two goes. A tad too much hidden danger too and a total lack of original ideas. Sick to platforms, Core.

18) **Viz** – What can you say? If it's a choice between this or the comic you'd be down the newsagents faster than you'll put the game back on the shelf and reach for the *Hollywood Collection* instead.

19) **Moonshine Racers** – If it's a laugh you're looking for then play this, because the jerky graphics make for a few chuckles. If as much time had been spent on the scrolling as on the great music the game would have been super.

20) **Brat** – Actually, I was going to put *Gods* here, but I decided that this was worse. Much worse. Okay, so it's very cute, and for the first few goes you think 'Hey! This is great!' But that's before you keep dying and sent back to the beginning time and again. Hasn't Image Works heard of restart points? Far too close to *Lemmings* for comfort too.

Well, there you have it. I realise that some of my opinions may seem a touch outlandish, but these are my true feelings and I'm sticking by them.

Yours

Gary Taphouse, Old Coulsdon, Surrey.

fortunate to own a second drive then many of the problems are solved, and if you load up the 60 Hertz program from the June edition of Amiga Format's coverdisk the gameplay is increased 10 fold.

I could go on for ages, but to let your eyes have a rest I'll just mention two more games. *Golden Axe* at number 96 is about as hard as blended water to complete, but the sheer humour of seeing your player mount a dragon and fry the living daylights out of your partner, who's trying frantically to knock you off, is enough to bring anyone out of the deepest depression and into screams of laughter – especially when he/she is on their last block of energy! Ha!

Finally, number 100 – *Grand Monster Slam*. What the hell is this doing in the Top 100?! It's not as bad as *Kick Off 2*, but it's not a Top 100 game. (Er, and by the way, is Electronic Arts going to publish *Wasteland* on its budget label soon? Could you please find out for me? Pretty please?)

Yours faithfully,
Darren Smith, Ashton-under-Lyne.

Well, Darren, you'll be pleased to know that at least as far as Kick Off 2 *is concerned, you've got a couple of allies. Ranged against the 100,000 or so raving fanatics on the side of Anco's footballing mega-success are yourself and our own Stuart and Mark, who cried and shouted and pleaded and sulked in an attempt to prevent* Kick Off 2 *appearing in our Top 100 at all, but to no avail. As for all the rest, you're on your own (well, except for regarding* Grand Monster Slam *which ex-Amiga Format editor Bob Wade just sneaked in when no-one else was looking). Oh, and with regard to* Wasteland, *EA say its re-release is 'possible', but they don't have any concrete plans for it at the moment. Sorry.*

And now onto a letter from one of our regular correspondents...

Dear Sir,

I recently discussed with a friend the games available for his elderly C64 compared to those on my Amiga. While having to agree that the Amiga is far superior in the loading, graphics and sound departments, it does tend to suffer as far as the playability and lastability of its games is concerned.

These were the strong point of nearly all the legendary 'classics' on the C64, and while I'm not sure which ingredients are missing, many of the elderly C64 titles certainly beat their Amiga counterparts in the staying category. While browsing through my friend's game collection, I must admit that some of the really old stuff (which is sadly very difficult to find) was a pleasure to play! For example, *PSI-5 Trading Company* had a real 'Star Trek' feel to it which has yet to be captured on the Amiga. The English version of *Aliens* was perhaps the pioneer of the *Dungeon Master*-type environment and was as such highly atmospheric. An arcade adventure named *Shogun* had a unique system of randomizing character attributes and object locations to ensure no two games were ever the same. Perhaps the first 'great' flight sim, *ACE*, had air-to-air refuelling via tanker (sadly not included in modern games of this genre) and the enemy armoured divisions you shot at weren't just for show but could actually conquer your homeland! The shoot-'em-up *Sanxion* was a split-screen affair which gave speed and height details of your ship – this made judging distances much easier than in most modern games of this type.

The above are just a few of the excellent games which have now sadly disappeared over the years. All are very different, each received rave reviews when first released over two years ago and did the 8-bit machines proud! It's just a pity none of them were never converted to the Amiga. The sound and graphics could have be improved upon, while more characters, levels and a larger playing area would increase depth. The lastability and playability, however, should remain identical to the original versions.

It may be the programmers have completely mastered the C64 while the Amiga gives them more memory than they really know what to do with, I don't know. What is obvious is that many of the newer games cannot contend with the 'Golden Oldies' on improved sound and graphics alone.

What are your views on this subject?

Yours faithfully,
Stuart Hardy, Wales, Sheffield.

Well, you won't find much disagreement here at Nostalgics Anonymous on how good some of the old 8-bit games used to be, but I think you're being a little bit hard on the Amiga. What about Lemmings, Speedball 2, Populous, Exile *and so many more for games that have real lasting appeal? As for* Star Trek, *have you checked out Tobias Richter's PD version on the Amiga? Indeed the Public Domain could be just the place for you in general. We've already featured some great 8-bit classics on our own cover disks and hopefully there'll be more to come, but if you check out a few PD libraries you'll find that many programmers seem to share your feelings. Just stick with us, and you'll get the best of both worlds!*

(And Stuart, please don't write the same letter, word for word, to three or so different computer mags again. It isn't big or hard or clever, you know).

Finally, it's that old 'favourite', the cover-mount debate again. This reader, however, has a rather different view to most...

Dear Sir,

I write in reply to a letter which was printed in your third issue from 'A worried fan of AMIGA POWER'. The letter in question puts forward an opinion on the subject of cover mounted games, and the ban on them, but it seems to me that whoever wrote it is slightly mixed up. He/she writes: 'Cover mounted games start appearing, quality titles such as *Interphase, Balance Of Power, E-Motion, Gravity, Bombuzal* and *Kid Gloves*, so there is no longer a need to pirate games' – but surely if there is no longer a need to pirate games there can no longer be a need to buy games, so where do the software houses go from there? (*Don't entirely follow that one, actually. Ed*) Mind you, having said that I don't believe that cover-mounted games affect piracy anyway. Just because somebody has, say, *Kid Gloves*, it will not stop them wanting, say, *Gods*, will it?

So at the end of the day the simple fact is, if you want a magazine buy a magazine, if you want software buy software. After all, we have no right to expect both.

Regards,
Craig O'Mahony, Northfield, Birmingham.

Come on Roger, we'd know your handwriting anywhere... Seriously though, an interesting (if slightly muddled) angle on the debate, Craig, but one that puts you in a minority of about one amongst the vocal portion of our readership so far. Still, if anyone else out there thinks magazines are magazines and software is software and never the twain shall meet, why not write in and let us know?

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AFRIKA KORPS
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Uppers – Intelligent opponents set it apart from the standard wargame. ***Downers*** – But not enough to give it any flair. ***The Bottom Line*** – Just because it's a wargame, it doesn't mean it has to be so obviously primitive. ★

ALPHA WAVES
Infogrames £25.99

Uppers – Nice 3D bouncing romp. Bizarre, but endearing. ***Downers*** – It tends to feel like an executive toy, and a very expensive one at that. ***The Bottom Line*** – A novel diversion but no great shakes. ★★

THE AMAZING SPIDERMAN
Empire £24.99

Uppers – Old fashioned platform gameplay still holds up well. ***Downers*** – Tiny sprites and – let's face it – it all looks rather crap when you first see it. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fun, but do you really want to fork out 25 quid for what's basically a crumbly old 8-bit game? ★★

AMIGA ENCOUNTER
Novagen £20.42

Uppers – Very fast and atmospheric. ***Downers*** – It's just *Battlezone* yet again. Incredibly thin gameplay for a full-price 16-bitter. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good old-fashioned zooming 'n' blasting fun, but it really should have been a budget game. ★★★

ARMOUR-GEDDON
Psygnosis £25.99

Uppers – Lots of tanks, lots of planes, lots of places to go. It's deep and wide and tall (and good-looking to boot). ***Downers*** – Takes a lot of self-discipline to play properly. ***The Bottom Line*** – A natural successor to *Carrier Command*, and – it has to be said – a worthy one too.★★★★

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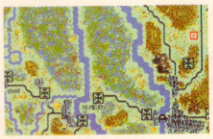

Uppers – An 8-bit classic wargame finally brought to Amiga owners. ***Downers*** – ...but nobody really wanted it anyway. ***The Bottom Line*** – Primitive beyond belief – even wargamers should give it a wide berth. ★

A-10 TANK KILLER
Dynamix (Sierra) £35.75

Uppers – A wealth of typical flight sim-style detail, and a genuine feeling of taking part in a major conflict. ***Downers*** – Gameplay suffers due to the sluggish frame rate and lack of a real flying 'feel'. ***The Bottom Line*** – An interesting but flawed attempt at taking the flight simulation genre a stage further. ★★★

ATF II
Digital Integration £24.99

Uppers – Good old-fashioned 3D fly-and-shoot game. ***Downers*** – It's no flight sim, and it's not a fully-fledged arcade blast either. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fun as far as it goes. ★★

ATOMIC ROBOKID
Activision £24.99

Uppers – Plenty of levels, plenty of action. ***Downers*** – Not particularly fast (and certainly not new!) ***The Bottom Line*** – Reasonable straightforward shoot-'em-up in the 'son of *R-Type*' vein. ★★

ATOMINO
Psygnosis £25.99

Uppers – Easy to pick up, with thousands of levels to keep you going. ***Downers*** – Can covalent bonding be fun? We're not sure. Rather samey; very tough; crap music. ***The Bottom Line*** – Slightly similar to *Pipe Mania* in some ways – if you liked that, try this. ★★★

BACK TO THE FUTURE PART III
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Variety, neat animation, some decent jokes. ***Downers*** – But film licences nearly always feel too thin to be worth 25 quid... ***The Bottom Line*** – ...and this one's no different. Fun but slight. ★★★

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Uppers – A close conversion... ***Downers*** – ...of a crap overhead-view arcade race game. ***The Bottom Line*** – So workmanlike its jeans hang over its arse. ★★

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Uppers – Based on the excellent but un-released *Infection* puzzle game. ***Downers*** – The concept is spoiled by senseless changes to the rules. ***The Bottom Line*** – Interesting, but ineptly executed. ★★

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Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – A satisfying bout of monster bashing to appeal to the usual *Bard's Tale* mob. ***Downers*** – New ideas and fancy programming are sadly lacking. ***The Bottom Line*** – Monumentally unspectacular, but kinda nice all the same. One for the hardened D&D freak. ★★★

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Uppers – Intergalactic intrigue in a novel interactive comic book style. ***Downers*** – Perhaps a little too left-of-centre for some. ***The Bottom Line*** – Very different, and actually very good. ★★★

BATTLE COMMAND
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Loads of missions, atmospheric solid 3D graphics (ie lots of green), plus a good mix of strategy and blasting. ***Downers*** – Takes a while to get into; some odd (and impossible to complete) missions. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you've got the self-discipline to persevere past an uninspiring start, this is a worthy follow-up to the classic *Carrier Command*. ★★★

BATTLEMASTER
PSS £29.99

Uppers – A tired fantasy/strategy plot given new lease of life by excellent graphics and oodles of playability. ***Downers*** – Arcade junkies need not apply, despite the abundance of genocidal mayhem. ***The Bottom Line*** – Try it – you may be surprised. ★★★

BEAST BUSTERS
Activision £25.99

Uppers – Graphically close to the original. ***Downers*** – Slows down when there's a lot happening, and it's far too easy. ***The Bottom Line*** – Doesn't compare too well with all the other *Op Wolf* games on the Amiga. ★★

BETRAYAL
Rainbird £29.99

Uppers – Fantasy blended with strategy and some nice graphical touches offers an intriguing hybrid. ***Downers*** – The game really needs several human players to make it exciting. ***The Bottom Line*** – Once again Rainbird attempt something a little bit different. ★★★

BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE
Capstone (Accolade) £24.99

Uppers – In our humble opinion, a most excellent subject for a licence. The game even manages to capture some of the flavour of the bodacious film too. ***Downers*** – But that doesn't stop it being a strong contender for the 'Weakest Gameplay In The World' award. ***The Bottom Line*** – Something of a missed opportunity. Let's hope for better things if they make a game of the film sequel... ★★

BLUE MAX
Mindscape £34.99

Uppers – Less techie than most flying thangs. Some rather spiffing sound complements the WWI feel nicely. ***Downers*** – Not a winner in the user-friendliness stakes, and the slow and sloppy main game never (ahem) really takes off. ***The Bottom Line*** – Dull. *Not* the definitive bi-plane game for Biggles buffs it should have been. ★

BOTICS
Krisalis £19.99

Uppers – Nice sound; futuristic graphics. ***Downers*** – Absolutely dire *Pong*-style gameplay. ***The Bottom Line*** – Get out of here! ★

BRAT
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Very pretty, very smooth, very challenging. ***Downers*** – ...and very, very irritating indeed, especially if you hate the central character. ***The Bottom Line*** – Okay if you play it with the sound off. ★★★

BREACH 2
Impressions £24.99

Uppers – Stick with it and you'll find an immensely rewarding space/strategy blast with loads of levels. ***Downers*** – Scrappy graphics and some awkward quirks will deter many. ***The Bottom Line*** – Loved *Laser Squad*? Then you'll probably take a shine to *Breach 2*. ★★

BRIGADE COMMANDER
Electronic Zoo £25.99

Uppers – Desert Storm scenarios give it a nice touch of topicality. ***Downers*** – The usual crap graphics. ***The Bottom Line*** – Friendlier than the average wargame, and more playable too. ★★★

CADAVER
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Gorgeously atmospheric graphics; a good mix of puzzling and hacking. ***Downers*** – One or two irritating moments and it's all a bit lacking in the excitement department. ***The Bottom Line*** – A nice blend of 3D graphics and adventuring (but it's not a classic). ★★★

CADAVER – THE PAYOFF
Renegade £16.99

Uppers – A wonderful add-on for fans of the first *Cadaver*. ***Downers*** – Not a lot of use for anyone else though. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you've got the original, this isn't such a bad price to pay for more of the same. ★★★

CAPTIVE
Mindscape £24.99

Uppers – Neat icon-control system enhances an atmospheric (and massive) exploration challenge. ***Downers*** – The game system is quite similar to *Dungeon Master*, so joystick freaks won't find much to enjoy here. ***The Bottom Line*** – A genuine Amiga classic. ★★★★

THE CARDINAL OF THE KREMLIN
Accolade £24.99

Uppers – Reasonably captivating and accessible strategy. ***Downers*** – Ridiculous arcade sequence dropped slap bang in the middle of the game almost totally destroys the atmosphere. ***The Bottom Line*** – Alarmingly stupid design blows what could have been a winner. ★★

CARTHAGE
Psygnosis £24.99

Uppers – Excellent graphics and some nifty arcade sequences from the masters of slick programming. ***Downers*** – But underneath it's a distinctly average strategy game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Despite appearances, not one for the joystick junkies out there. ★★★

Where's the best place to go for a complete rundown on what's hot and what's most definitely rot in the software stakes? The Bottom Line, of course – AMIGA POWER's utterly indispensable guide to every significant full price game released over the past year or so. Every month we trash the old and stale, and squeeze in the latest, greatest (and the dodgiest). As always, there's a chance to catch up on older games which you really should have checked out already. And you can gauge the likely appeal of those which are making a play for the charts. This month, keep an eye on the excellent new trio of *R-Type II, Manchester United Europe* and *Hunter*...

THE BOTTOM LINE

RATINGS: ★★★★★ Excellent ★★★★★ Nearly there ★★★★ Very good ★★★ Has its moments ★★ Flawed ★ Dire

CENTURION
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – Fairly interesting management sections with some nifty battle sequences. ***Downers*** – Two appalling arcade sections blow its chances. ***The Bottom Line*** – Un-balanced. ★★

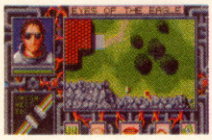
CHALLENGE GOLF
On-Line £24.99

Uppers – Easy to get into, and up to four players catered for. ***Downers*** – Mind-numbingly unrealistic putting sequence, and loads of unnecessary little bugs. ***The Bottom Line*** – Lack of playability makes this a seriously below-par golf sim. Go for *PGA Tour Golf* instead. ★

CHAMPION OF THE RAJ
Image Works £25.99

Uppers – Arcade sequences break up the heavy-duty strategy action. ***Downers*** – Even more ridiculous disk accessing than usual in this type of thing. Crap programming generally. ***The Bottom Line*** – Potentially good game ruined by complete lack of playability. ★

CHAOS IN ANDROMEDA
On-Line £24.99



Uppers – Lots of character interaction and plenty to do. ***Downers*** – Crap fight sequences and tiny graphics. ***The Bottom Line*** – Enjoyable *Ultima*-style adventure slightly spoiled by sloppy programming. Still good fun though. ★★★

CHAOS STRIKES BACK
Mirrorsoft £24.99

Uppers – Complex and ingenious puzzles; very user friendly; great sound. ***Downers*** – Slightly old fashioned looking. ***The Bottom Line*** – Engrossing role playing adventure using the *Dungeon Master* game system. ★★★★

CHASE HQ II
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Well, it's not as disastrous as the first conversion. ***Downers*** – But still terminally average. It drives like a brick. A brick underwater in fact. With lead weights. ***The Bottom Line*** – It looks as tired as *Miami Vice*. ★★

CHUCK ROCK
Core Design £24.99

Uppers – A first class caveman romp, with some innovation in the gameplay for once. ***Downers*** – A touch shallow and a touch easy. ***The Bottom Line*** – Pretty brilliant platformer, one of the Amiga's very best. ★★★★

CHUCK YEAGER'S ADVANCED FLIGHT TRAINER 2.0
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – A veritable air force of planes to fly, with piles of options, missions and the obligatory load of external views. There's even the opportunity to fly the Space Shuttle. ***Downers*** – A complete lack of speed, bad disk access and naff perspective put the dampers on the whole affair. ***The Bottom Line*** – Low flying flight sim – fails to stay with the competition. ★★★

CHIP'S CHALLENGE
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Lots and lots of levels; typically well thought out console-style gameplay. ***Downers*** – Simplistic graphics; lack of depth. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good, but not the most characterful of puzzle games, and not the cheapest either. ★★★

COHORT
Impressions £29.99

Uppers – (Relatively) excellent graphics and helpful user-interface make things accessible. ***Downers*** – The game is not without flaws, and the controls system isn't as good as it should be. ***The Bottom Line*** – A fine off-beat wargame, but overpriced. ★★

THE COLONEL'S BEQUEST
Sierra £34.99

Uppers – Mildly intriguing whodunit, with that ever so familiar Sierra style of presentation. ***Downers*** – Terrible graphics, hours of tedium. ***The Bottom Line*** – Overpriced and over here. Sierra can do much better than this. ★★

COMMANDO
Elite £19.99

Uppers – Lovingly recreated coin-op blast-'em scroller. The game that launched a thousand scrolling war blasters (*Mercs, Warzone et al*). ***Downers*** – As fashionable as an anorak. ***The Bottom Line*** – Classic stuff, but not a good indication of the Amiga's capabilities. ★★★

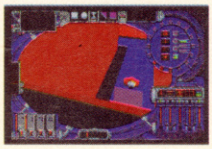
COUGAR FORCE
Tomahawk £19.99

Uppers – The box is quite interesting (actually that's a bit of a lie). ***Downers*** – Everything. The sound, the graphics, the gameplay – all dire in the extreme. ***The Bottom Line*** – A perfect present for pyromaniacs. ★

CRIME WAVE
US Gold £24.95

Uppers – Gore galore; the numerous video interludes spice it up a bit. ***Downers*** – The actual game is dull in the extreme, and the waiting between levels is monstrous. ***The Bottom Line*** – A bog-standard blast-'em-up with knobs on. ★

CYBERCON III
US Gold £24.99



Uppers – Brilliant sense of 'being there', and better Freescape than Freescape. ***Downers*** – Predictably, not all that accessible to your average games player. ***The Bottom Line*** – Well worth the effort of getting into. ★★★★★

DAS BOOT
Mindscape £29.99

Uppers – The most accessible sub sim to date. ***Downers*** – ...but that still doesn't make it particularly accessible. ***The Bottom Line*** – Playable, but overpriced. The best in its field. ★★★

DEATH TRAP
Anco £24.99

Uppers – Unusual mix of horizontally-scrolling arcade adventure and magic. ***Downers*** – Naff scrolling and poor sound mar the atmosphere. ***The Bottom Line*** – A refreshingly playable game. ★★

DEFENDER II
ARC £24.99

Uppers – *Defender, Defender II* and *Stargate* all in one package. ***Downers*** – Only purists will appreciate the archaic graphics, one or two essential features are omitted, and to be honest the *Defender II* game is duff. ***The Bottom Line*** – Every home should have one. ★★★★

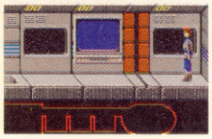
DEUTEROS
Activision £25.99

Uppers – An incredibly huge and absorbing game, with challenges that seem perfectly paced to be in tune with the developing game-skills of the average player. ***Downers*** – Visually it can be a bit of a yawn. ***The Bottom Line*** – Don't be fooled by the strategy exterior – this is a game that everyone should try. ★★★★★

DISC
Loriciel £24.99

Uppers – A few nice graphical touches. ***Downers*** – Appallingly-designed gameplay with very little actual action. ***The Bottom Line*** – A crappy *Discs Of Tron* rip-off without most of the original's good features. ★

DISCOVERY
Micro Illusions £25.99



Uppers – Good graphics for an educational game. ***Downers*** – For a game which relies heavily on speech synthesis, the speech quality is terrible. ***The Bottom Line*** – Tricky to play and educationally dubious. This is a bit of a flop. ★★

DISTANT ARMIES
Exocet £24.99

Uppers – Ten different variations of chess, all in one package. Nice graphics, tons of background information. ***Downers*** – Definitely for chess-heads only. ***The Bottom Line*** – The ideal present for the cerebral Amiga owner. ★★★

DRAGON BREED
Activision £24.99

Uppers – A near perfect arcade conversion; niftily animated main dragon sprite. ***Downers*** – The zillionth sideways scrolling shoot-'em-up of last year. ***The Bottom Line*** – One instinctively knows when a conversion is right. ★★★★

DRAGONFLIGHT
Thalion £34.99

Uppers – Elegantly designed, perfectly executed fantasy RPG. ***Downers*** – If only it wasn't such a tired old genre. ***The Bottom Line*** – Over-priced, unspectacular, but (let's be fair) still reasonable fun. ★★★

DRAGONS OF FLAME
SSI (US Gold) £24.99

Uppers – Almost instant playability – not something you'd expect from a role playing game. ***Downers*** – A bit simplistic for real Dungeons & Dragons fans. ***The Bottom Line*** – An excellent introduction to the new bread of fantasy RPGs. ★★★

DRAGON'S LAIR II
Readysoft £44.95

Uppers – Really incredibly gorgeous cartoon graphics. ***Downers*** – Minimal player interaction and a ridiculous price tag. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not the best value game in the world. ★★

ECO PHANTOMS
Electronic Zoo £25.99

Uppers – A nice line in H.G.Wells sci-fi theatrics and some unusual sub-sections give *Eco Phantoms* a highly original flavour. ***Downers*** – The parts don't actually add up to very much, and the copy protection system could induce bouts of violence. ***The Bottom Line*** – A reasonable 3D routine masquerading as a game. ★

EDD THE DUCK
Impulze £24.99

Uppers – *Rainbow Islands*-inspired gameplay ensures some level of interest. ***Downers*** – But the whole thing just doesn't inspire, and the difficulty is placed too high for a young audience. ***The Bottom Line*** – Your granny might buy you one. ★★

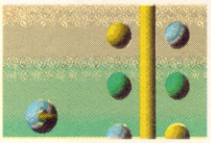
ELVIRA – MISTRESS OF THE DARK
Accolade £24.99

Uppers – Elvira's gorgeous; the graphics really draw the player in. ***Downers*** – Pity the game itself is nigh on impossible – and it takes five disks! ***The Bottom Line*** – Falls apart due to disk swapping and infuriating gameplay. ★★

EMLYN HUGHES' ARCADE QUIZ
Audiogenic £24.99

Uppers – Just like a pub quiz machine... ***Downers*** – ...but with Emlyn Hughes in it (and no real cash prizes). ***The Bottom Line*** – Oh dear. ★

E-MOTION
US Gold £19.99



Uppers – Weird graphics and mindboggling gameplay set *E-Motion* apart from just about any other game. ***Downers*** – The whole concept may prove difficult to get your mind around. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you can handle the basic idea *E-Motion* offers many joyous hours of swearing and frustration. ★★★★★

ESWAT
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – As conversions go, it's not a complete nightmare... ***Downers*** – ...but let's be honest, the arcade original was duff, duff, duff. ***The Bottom Line*** – A reasonable conversion of a terminally average game. ★

EUROPEAN SUPERLEAGUE
CDS £24.99

Uppers – A surprisingly involving footy strategy thing in the *Football Manager* vein. ***Downers*** – They're not still making these things are they? ***The Bottom Line*** – A dated idea – it sounds tedious but it's actually executed quite commendably. ★★

EXILE
Audiogenic £24.99

Uppers – Real-world physics incorporated into an arcade game; it's more of a true arcade adventure than most games bearing that tag. ***Downers*** – Rather primitive graphics, and not the most instantly playable game ever. ***The Bottom Line*** – A great arcade adventure, but it might not be your cup of tea if you're an action fan. ★★★★★

EXTERMINATOR
Audiogenic £24.99

Uppers – Very original (read 'very, very odd indeed') arcade thing, well converted to retain the original's feel. ***Downers*** – Confusing initially, but once you've played it for a while it's...confusing. ***The Bottom Line*** – Great fun, but it doesn't really make it in the longevity stakes. ★★★

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER
SSI (US Gold) £29.99

Uppers – Takes *Dungeon Master* a step further. Excellent atmosphere and graphics. ***Downers*** – Despite being better than *DM*, it's not actually very different from it at all. ***The Bottom Line*** – The best D&D game yet for the Amiga. (Or, indeed, for anything else.) ★★★★★

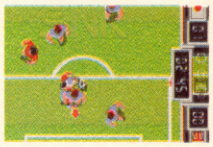
F-15 STRIKE EAGLE II
MicroProse £34.99

Uppers – Graphics to make you gasp, sound effects to get your adrenalin pumping and gameplay to leave you in a quivering heap on the floor. ***Downers*** – Despite the shoot-'em-up nature of things, it can all be a touch too much for the less ambitious games player. ***The Bottom Line*** – Quite possibly the last word in flight sims (so far, anyway). ★★★★★

F-19 STEALTH FIGHTER
MicroProse £29.99

Uppers – Strategy and accuracy combine to bring a fresh edge to an over-populated genre. Hide, strike and run away! ***Downers*** – If you're good it can get dull, as no one knows you're there! ***The Bottom Line*** – Damn fine simulation. ★★★★

FIGHTING SOCCER
Activision £24.99



Uppers – The coin-op was mildly amusing(ish). ***Downers*** – You are accused of producing an utterly dull game of the lowest calibre. How do you plead? ***The Bottom Line*** – Guilty as hell. ★

THE FOOL'S ERRAND
Miles Computing £24.95

Uppers – A puzzle game with real lastability – 80 problems to get your brain aching. ***Downers*** – Underneath the gloss, a fairly average game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Just okay. ★★

FRENETIC
Core Design £20.99

Uppers – Fast and good-looking. ***Downers*** – You've seen this all before, and done rather more excitingly into the bargain. ***The Bottom Line*** – Slick programming only serves to make *Frenetic* tedious in a professional kind of a way. ★★

FUTURE BASKETBALL
Hewson £24.99
Uppers – Fast, violent, exciting and well presented mayhem. ***Downers*** – The poor man's *Speedball 2*. ***The Bottom Line*** – Doesn't have the depth of the Bitmaps' classic, but enormous fun all the same. ★★★

GALAXY FORCE II
Activision £24.99
Uppers – An ambitious attempt at a visually stunning coin-op. ***Downers*** – Everything else. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you know you can't do it why bother trying? ★

GARFIELD – THE WINTER'S TAIL
The Edge £24.99
Uppers – Brilliant Jim Davis graphics. ***Downers*** – Crappy Steve Davis gameplay. ***The Bottom Line*** – What a wasted licence. For die-hard fans only. ★

GAZZA II
Empire £24.99
Uppers – Gazza doesn't actually appear in the game much. ***Downers*** – Juddering sprites, poor control (just like the man himself), terrible sound – take your pick. ***The Bottom Line*** – It's enough to reduce you to tears. ★

GEM'X
Demonware £24.99

Uppers – Gorgeous graphics, exquisite sound, beautifully simple mental torture. ***Downers*** – Won't change your mind if you're not into puzzlers. ***The Bottom Line*** – One of the best puzzle games to date. ★★★★

GERM CRAZY
Electronic Zoo £25.99

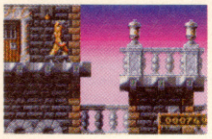
Uppers – Not quite as expensive as Mindscape's *Life & Death*. ***Downers*** – But with little else in its favour. ***The Bottom Line*** – Another half-baked idea, not followed through properly. (Where do they all come from?) ★

GENGHIS KHAN
Infogrames £39.99
Uppers – Stylish and fairly deep historical strategy game. ***Downers*** – Ridiculously expensive though, and requires a fair dose of manual reading. ***The Bottom Line*** – A bit of a cliché, but 'good if you like that sort of thing.' ★★★

GHOST BATTLE
Thalion £25.53

Uppers – The sound's quite good and the graphics are okay. ***Downers*** – Everything else is utterly awful. ***The Bottom Line*** – Badly-designed and executed *Ghosts'n'Goblins* clone that's so bad it's scary. ★

GODS
Renegade £25.53



Uppers – Lovely aesthetics, quite involved for a platform game. ***Downers*** – Not quite as good as it's made out to be. ***The Bottom Line*** – Don't believe the hype, but pretty damn good all the same. ★★★★★

GOLDEN AXE
Virgin £24.99
Uppers – Perfect arcade conversion, with every last feature implemented. ***Downers*** – There never really was a lot of variation in the gameplay. ***The Bottom Line*** – Visually stunning, but not different enough to separate it from the usual beat-'em-up. ★★★

GRAND PRIX MASTER
Dinamic £19.95
Uppers – Endorsed by Jorge Martinez (apparently famous on the 80cc motorcycle circuit). ***Downers*** – Handles like a Reliant Robin. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not to put too fine a point on it, useless. ★

GREMLINS II
Elite £24.99
Uppers – Cute as hell, with graphics and sound nigh on perfect. ***Downers*** – It really is far too difficult. ***The Bottom Line*** – A good film licence. ★★★

GUNBOAT
Uppers £29.99

Uppers – A sim which actually does something different. ***Downers*** – The action doesn't really convey enough excitement, and the graphics are a little on the primitive side. ***Bottom Line*** – A highly complex sim, this takes quite some time to get drawn into. ★★★

HALLS OF MONTEZUMA
Electronic Arts £25.99

Uppers – Almost unlimited lastability, thanks to the huge numbers of scenarios and variables. ***Downers*** – Off-puttingly complicated, and offers nothing new to the unconverted. ***Bottom Line*** – Well put together, but still strictly for diehards. ★★

HAMMERFIST
Vivid Image (Activision) £24.99
Uppers – Graphically adept arcade adventure with tons of playability and plenty to keep you going. ***Downers*** – Iffy sound. ***The Bottom Line*** – Thoroughly enjoyable (if you like that sort of thing). ★★★

HARD DRIVIN' II
Tengen (Domark) £24.99
Uppers – Refined version of the original – less bugs, a track editor, a neat 'head-to-head' option if you link two machines... ***Downers*** – ...but still glitchy and not a patch on the arcade machine. ***The Bottom Line*** – Souped up, but not souped up enough. ★★

HEART OF THE DRAGON
Avatar Computing £25.99

Uppers – Lots of colours, and an (almost serious) attempt to do something new with the fantasy beat-'em-up. ***Downers*** – Beyond the almost impressive technical trickery lies not very much at all really. ***The Bottom Line*** – If your friend has bought it, give it a go. Then laugh very heartily at him. Entertaining in an embarrassing sort of way. ★

HELTER SKELTER
Audiogenic £19.99
Uppers – Highly original gameplay; password system greatly increases addictiveness; great cartoon sound effects. ***Downers*** – Extremely tricky control method which is difficult to use even after several years of practice. Gets samey after a while. ***The Bottom Line*** – Dubious lasting appeal, but a fun little game if you fancy something a bit different. ★★★

HERO QUEST
Gremlin £25.99

Uppers – Easy to get into, and deceptively addictive. You don't think you've been playing it for long, but suddenly it's Thursday and you're a week late for dinner. ***Downers*** – Not so good as a one-player game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Perhaps surprisingly, a highly entertaining game, and absolutely ideal when you've got game-playing friends round. The best board-game conversion yet. ★★★★

HILL STREET BLUES
Krisalis £24.99

Uppers – A good feel for the TV series; characters (both player and others) that you can identify with. It's certainly an interesting way to handle a licence. ***Downers*** – Gets repetitive pretty quickly, and like most strategy games, it's not the slickest thing around. ***The Bottom Line*** – A good next step for someone who's played *Sim City* to death and fancies a new cerebral challenge. Fairly limited appeal, though. ★★★

HORROR ZOMBIES FROM THE CRYPT
Millennium £24.99
Uppers – Unusual idea; suitably spooky graphics. ***Downers*** – But let down by the dull platform nature of the game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Funny to watch, but fairly average to play, and a pretty bad buy. ★★

HUNTER
Activision £25.99

Uppers – Stunning 3D graphics and loads to do. ***Downers*** – The odd little graphical glitch or two. ***Bottom Line*** – Enormously absorbing game – you'll find yourself completely captivated by it for hours on end. ★★★★★

HYDRA
Domark £24.99
Uppers – Um, nice moving-water effect. ***Downers*** – Terrible control feel; duff, unclear graphics; feeble gameplay. ***The Bottom Line*** – An almost-competent conversion of a useless game. ★

THE IMMORTAL
Electronic Arts £24.99
Uppers – A game which makes real use of one meg memory... ***Downers*** – ...which means most Amiga owners will never see it. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not the best fantasy arcade adventure by any means, but the gorgeous graphics lift it well above average. ★★★

INDIANA JONES ADVENTURE
US Gold £19.99
Uppers – More fine-tuning gives *Indy* the friendliest control system yet. It's pretty faithful to the movie too! ***Downers*** – Waiting for Indy to trek across the screen all the time can get annoying and some of the puzzles are just a wee bit too abstract. ***The Bottom Line*** – One of the best Amiga adventures available. ★★★★

INDIANAPOLIS 500
Electronic Arts £24.95
Uppers – An immensely playable blend of true racing sim and quick track blast, with a nice line in remote camera views (if you've got a one meg machine). ***Downers*** – Track repetition hinders lasting appeal. ***The Bottom Line*** – Just fabulous. ★★★★★

INTERNATIONAL SOCCER CHALLENGE
MicroProse £24.99
Uppers – Soccer in 3D? A very brave attempt to do something new with a tired old game-style... ***Downers*** – ...which unfortunately falls flat on its face. ***The Bottom Line*** – Foul. ★

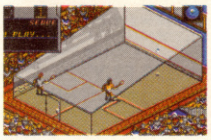
I PLAY 3D SOCCER
Simulmondo £25.99

Uppers – The most dynamic and visually convincing representation of the sport yet. ***Downers*** – The realism is so high that you hardly ever get to kick the ball, and the 3D display system can be downright confusing. ***The Bottom Line*** – Brave, but ultimately flawed. ★★

IRON LORD
Ubi Soft £24.99
Uppers – Cinemaware-style medieval epic with plenty of sub-games and atmospheric presentation. ***Downers*** – It's just too tough for most, and with little real depth. ***The Bottom Line*** – Ultimately repetitive, but fun for a while. ★★

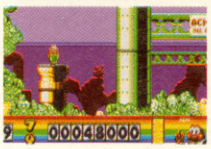
ISHIDO
Accolade £24.99
Uppers – Take *Othello*, add some *Go*, then throw in a few herbs and spices and heat until brown. The result is one piping hot Chinese board game called *Ishido*. ***Downers*** – Irritating dialogue boxes, and the luck element can infuriate. ***The Bottom Line*** – An engaging piece of Chinese culture, which should really be played with a good strong cup of tea. ★★

JAHANGIR KHAN'S CHAMPIONSHIP SQUASH
Krisalis £25.53



Uppers – Easy to play, closely adheres to the rules of the real thing, and there's plenty of options on offer. ***Downers*** – There's not really a lot you can do with a squash game, is there? ***The Bottom Line*** – The best squash game around for the Amiga. (Not that there's much in the way of competition). ★★★

JAMES POND
Millennium £24.99



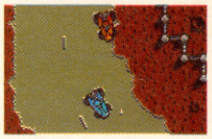
Uppers – It's slicker than a pot of Brylcreem, with beautifully simple gameplay to instantly hook the unsuspecting player. Pretty groovy sound too. ***Downers*** – Lacks any real adrenalin-pumping qualities. ***The Bottom Line*** – Loads of initial cute appeal, but really a pretty run-of-the-mill arcade runabout. ★★★

JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND SNOOKER
Virgin £24.99

Uppers – Stunning 3D camera-style view on the action, and the actual rules and physical mechanics of the game are re-created beautifully. ***Downers*** – Well, it's still only snooker. Some extra statistics would have been nice too. ***Bottom Line*** – Wonderful. Brilliant. A veritable corker. A classic. A 90 percenter. Need we say more? ★★★★★

JUDGE DREDD
Virgin £24.99
Uppers – Two ancient sub-games offer a real rave from the grave. ***Downers*** – Another *Judge Dredd* game screwed up totally. No humour, no graphics, no game. ***The Bottom Line*** – One day somebody will do justice (ahem) to the legend of Dredd. One day. ★

JUPITER'S MASTERDRIVE
Ubi Soft £24.99



Uppers – Surprisingly playable race game. More fun than a packet of Jammy Dodgers. ***Downers*** – Unspectacular and overpriced. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not sure why, but it really is jolly good fun. ★★

KEEF THE THIEF
Electronic Arts £24.99
Uppers – Excellent hack, slash and puzzle solving with some superb stylised graphics. ***Downers*** – It still plays like your average role-playing adventure. ***The Bottom Line*** – Respectable Tolkien-esque fare. ★★★

THE KILLING CLOUD
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Fast-moving and pretty graphics, bags of depth, and a great creation of atmosphere. ***Downers*** – Riddled with inconsistencies and badly-executed ideas. ***The Bottom Line*** – Could have been a contender, but badly lets itself down in the logic stakes.★★★

THE KILLING GAME SHOW
Psygnosis £24.99
Uppers – Straightforward fun game sharing some aspects of gameplay with *Rainbow Islands*. The interactive replay feature is interesting, innovative, and useful. ***Downers*** – The usual Psygnosis metallic graphics don't really suit; it gets a bit too complicated for its own good later on, detracting from the simplicity that initially makes it so addictive. ***The Bottom Line*** – Despite unusually poor graphics, this is one of Psygnosis' best and most playable games to date. ★★★

LAST NINJA 2
System 3 £24.99
Uppers – Excellent 3D isometric graphics and a genuine attempt to inject some strategy into the martial arts genre. ***Downers*** – The game just isn't cohesive, and it plays like a pig. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not really in the Bruce Lee league (barely scraping Jackie Chan level to be honest). ★★

LANCASTER
Actual Screenshots £24.95
Uppers – Fairly impressive 3D polygon graphics. ***Downers*** – Lack of variation and any real excitement means it barely gets off the ground. ***The Bottom Line*** – Elevates averageness to an art form. ★★

LEISURE SUIT LARRY III
Sierra £34.99
Uppers – Ridiculous, over-sexed plot. Adventuring for consenting adults. ***Downers*** – Slightly obtrusive command parser, and as usual it's over-priced. ***The Bottom Line*** – Check it out – but only if you are over eighteen. ★★★

LEMMINGS
Psygnosis £24.99

Uppers – Utterly bizarre, pleasingly original and totally addictive. Invents a totally new category – the save-'em-up. ***Downers*** – As is the norm with such strikingly original concepts, some may wonder just what all the fuss is about. ***The Bottom Line*** – Love it or loathe it, you can't ignore it. *Lemmings* rules. ★★★★★

LIFE AND DEATH
Mindscape £25.53

Uppers – Excellent packaging (the surgical mask and gloves are wild), and some fairly amusing gameplay keeps things on the boil for a couple of hours. ***Downers*** – Repetition soon sets in – as a long-term challenge it all falls apart quite alarmingly. ***The Bottom Line*** – What's there is quite good, but there's just not enough of it. ★★

LINE OF FIRE
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Imagine all the Rambo films back-to-back on fast-forward, and you have a good idea how much violence this game contains. ***Downers*** – You also have a pretty good idea of how intelligent it is. ***The Bottom Line*** – An impossible arcade conversion proves totally and utterly impossible. ★★

LOGICAL

Rainbow Arts £19.99

Uppers – The ease of play makes this a nicely accessible puzzler. ***Downers*** – But the amount of time each move takes also makes it a seriously tedious one. ***The Bottom Line*** – In a crowded world of puzzle games, *Logical* is very blunt in the mustard area. ★★

LOOM
Lucasfilm (US Gold) £24.99

Uppers – Great atmosphere, enhanced by the accompanying tape, booklets etc. It's certainly a lavish package. ***Downers*** – An adventure without typing? It certainly won't appeal to purists, and the 'audio drama' is laughable. ***The Bottom Line*** – Once again Lucasfilm strive for something different. The results are interesting, if not totally successful. ★★★

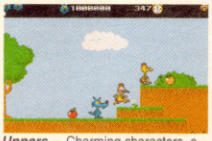
LORDS OF CHAOS
Blade £24.99

Uppers – Great control system, comprehensive and logical. Lots of levels equal great lastability. ***Downers*** – Very little action; not much compulsion to reach your rather abstract goal. ***The Bottom Line*** – A disappointing game from Julian Gollop, not up to his usual standard. Wait for *Laser Squad 2*. ★★★

LOTUS ESPRIT TURBO CHALLENGE
Gremlin £24.99

Uppers – A wealth of control options lets you make the game more arcadey or simulatory according to preference. Bags of 'feel'. ***Downers*** – The other cars are a bit flat-looking, and half the screen is wasted in one-player mode. (You don't appear to be able to turn the annoying music off either). ***The Bottom Line*** – An extremely good driving game, even more fun with two players. ★★★★

LUPO ALBERTO
Idea £25.53



Uppers – Charming characters, a terribly translated manual, and goofy gameplay make it ideal for kids of all ages. ***Downers*** – The animation is funny for all the wrong reasons. Loveable but really rather crap. ***The Bottom Line*** – A game sure to cause argument. A case of try before you buy. ★★

MAGIC FLY
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – Very challenging. ***Downers*** – But not too thrilling, and who wants wireframe 3D in 1991? ***The Bottom Line*** – You may not find it worth all the bother of getting into it. ★★

MANCHESTER UNITED EUROPE
Krisalis £25.99

Uppers – Fast, pretty, and hugely playable. ***Downers*** – The strategy section is largely superficial (and what there is is optional). ***Bottom Line*** – Great control makes this just about the best football sim so far. ★★★★

MANIX
Millennium £24.99

Uppers – Charmingly surreal. ***Downers*** – But it's just an updated *Q-Bert* really, isn't it? ***The Bottom Line*** – Never really gets its hooks into you. ★★

MASTERBLAZER
Rainbow Arts £24.99

Uppers – Excellent two player mode, fast 3D action – all in all a respectable updating of the original future-sport game. ***Downers*** – Despite the new features, *Masterblazer* looks and feels dated. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fun for a few hours, but too simplistic to hold any lasting appeal. ★★★

MAUPITI ISLAND
Lankhor £25.99

Uppers – Pleasantly different, with loads of character interaction. ***Downers*** – Just too small to really justify the price. ***Bottom Line*** – Charming and interesting, but there just isn't enough of it. ★★★

MEAN STREETS
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Many different styles combine well for (ahem) a wide-ranging gameplay experience. ***Downers*** – Dragged down by disk swapping. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good solid entertainment. A bit like Lenny Henry, really. ★★★

MEGA TRAVELLER 1
Empire £30.64

Uppers – Terrifying depth, friendly and helpful controls, great atmosphere, excellent balance of strategy and action. ***Downers*** – It might all seem a bit too familiar to *Elite* players; occasional long disk-access pauses can irritate. ***The Bottom Line*** – A wonderful piece of role-playing software that everyone should play at least once. After that, you're unlikely to want to stop. ★★★★★

MERCS
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Faithful conversion of the coin-op, good-looking and fast-moving... ***Downers*** – ...but still just another *Commando* clone. ***The Bottom Line*** – Great at what it does, but you're likely to want rather more from a game in this day and age. ★★★

MIDNIGHT RESISTANCE
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Well-balanced gameplay with a smooth difficulty curve makes it stand out from a hundred similar coin-op conversions. Actually more playable than the arcade original. ***Downers*** – Control is awkward at first; could be a touch faster. ***The Bottom Line*** – Best of its type. ★★★

MIGHTY BOMB JACK
Elite £24.99

Uppers – Classic gameplay with added 16-bit features like, erm, power-ups. ***Downers*** – Sprawling levels lose the original's frantic urgency. ***The Bottom Line*** – Dull, dull, and then again dull. ★

MIG-29
Domark £29.99

Uppers – So real you'll be be hanging pictures of Gorby on your wall. ***Downers*** – Only five missions, with little in the way of excitement. ***The Bottom Line*** – Brave, but ultimately too techie for most Amiga owners. ★★★

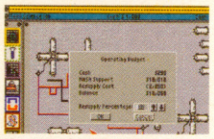
M1 TANK PLATOON
MicroProse £24.99

Uppers – Cheaper than a real tank. ***Downers*** – Needs a lot of perseverance. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not as much fun as actually having a tank platoon on the M1. ★★

MONOPOLY
Leisure Genius £19.99

Uppers – A faithful version of the classic (to say the least) board-game. ***Downers*** – Who the hell wants to play a board-game on their computer anyway? ***The Bottom Line*** – Competently done, but arguably quite pointless. ★★

MOONBASE
Mindscape £35.99



Uppers – Entertaining and addictive game in the best *Sim City* tradition. ***Downers*** – Just a bit too close to *Sim City* for comfort, though. ***Bottom Line*** – Fairly short-term entertainment, and more than a touch overpriced. ★★★

MOONSHINE RACERS
Millennium £24.99

Uppers: Erm, great hillbilly music. ***Downers:*** Slow, graphically horrible, totally derivative. ***The Bottom Line***: Almost as bad as Amiga *Chase HQ*, and you've got to admit that's pretty damn bad. ★

MUDS
Rainbow Arts £24.99

Uppers – Quite funny. ***Downers*** – Do we really need another rugby/basketball/ violence-based future sport? ***The Bottom Line*** – Giving everything silly names doesn't make this game different to the dozen others to which it's almost identical. ★★

MYSTICAL
Infogrames £24.99

Uppers – Fresh graphical approach to the the usual fantasy scenario. ***Downers*** – Really badly-thought-out two-player mode. ***The Bottom Line*** – An uninspired *Gauntlet* clone. ★★

'NAM
Domark £24.95

Uppers – Heavily researched, convincing and (dirty word) educational strategic war game. ***Downers*** – Very hard to win, the whole serious look to the thing could be a turn off. ***The Bottom Line*** – Political as well as tactical decision making gives a new dimension to war games. ★★★

NARC
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Great blood-spattering action; very close to the coin-op. ***Downers*** – Very dodgy on the playability front (not to say morally). ***The Bottom Line*** – Limited. ★★

NARCO POLICE
Dinamic £24.99

Uppers – Looks excellent. ***Downers*** – Computer takes a 'creative' attitude towards obeying control commands. ***The Bottom Line*** – Loud and action-packed blaster for expert commandos. ★★

NAVY SEALS
Ocean £25.39

Uppers – Quite good fun in a mindless arcade runaround sort of way. ***Downers*** – Technically unimpressive (to say the least), and there's very little to it. ***Bottom Line*** – Looks like an ST port, but if you can forget you paid £25 for it, it's pretty enjoyable. ★★

NEBULUS
Hewson £19.99

Uppers – Truly innovative gameplay and graphics which wouldn't look out of place in an arcade. The climb up/fall down routine makes it almost too addictive for safety. ***Downers*** – Not for softies – some could find this just too frustrating. ***The Bottom Line*** – Classically simple design makes for a game that won't let go once it gets its hooks into you (which will be about two minutes after you pick it up). ★★★★

NIGHT SHIFT
Lucasfilm (US Gold) £24.99

Uppers – Graphically innovative and full of character. ***Downers*** – Detail-packed background can make it hard to see where the actual platforms are; more time spent loading than playing. ***The Bottom Line*** – A few instructions would work wonders, but the game's overwhelming charm pulls it through. ★★★

NEW YORK WARRIORS
Virgin £19.99

Uppers – Reasonably atmospheric, undemanding blaster. ***Downers*** – Oh God, *Ikari Warriors Part 844194365408354*. ***The Bottom Line*** – You can buy much better, cheaper. ★

NINE LIVES
ARC £24.99

Uppers – Cute and inventive platform fun. ***Downers*** – Tougher than Mike Tyson in a suit of armour. With a bazooka. ***The Bottom Line*** – You've got as much chance of finishing it as Wile E. Coyote has of catching Road Runner. ★★★

NINJA WARRIORS
Virgin £19.99

Uppers – Novel 'Cinemascope'-esque screen layout. Dynamic Loading System is a boon but doesn't get rid of irritating swapping. ***Downers*** – Extremely repetitive action palls quickly. ***The Bottom Line*** – Even for a game of this type, the gameplay is too limited to hold the attention for any length of time. ★★

NITRO
Psygnosis £24.99

Uppers – Groovy graphics, smooth scrolling, excellent car-handling. ***Downers*** – A practically infinite-credit system means the game has little sense of urgency. You have to guess the course on later levels. ***The Bottom Line*** – Needs more in the way of immediate danger to be addictive, but (unlike many similar games) is as fun in one player mode as with a couple of chums. ★★★

OBITUS
Psygnosis £34.99

Uppers – Intro would make a great Amiga *Deathchase* game. ***Downers*** – *Obitus* itself is a dull *Dungeon Master* rip-off. ***The Bottom Line*** – Boring and ridiculously priced. ★★

ONSLAUGHT
Hewson £24.99

Uppers – Lovely sound and music; lots of depth. ***Downers*** – Very confusing graphics and gameplay, and the main sequences are technically below the level of your average budget game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Caught between the two stools of wargaming and platform zap games, this isn't a very good example of either. ★★

OOOPS UP
Demonware £24.95

Uppers – Arcade fun in the *Pang*, er, 'tradition'. ***Downers*** – Colossally inferior to the real thing. ***The Bottom Line*** – The excellent sampled music isn't enough to save this bare-faced rip-off. Check out the real thing instead. ★★

OPERATION THUNDERBOLT
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Utterly mindless genocidal slaughterfest; perhaps the best *Op Wolf* style game to date. ***Downers*** – More of the coin-op's appeal is down to the cabinet-mounted Uzi than you might think, leaving the Amiga version somewhat 'flat'. ***The Bottom Line*** – Everything you could expect a conversion of *Operation Thunderbolt* to be. ★★★

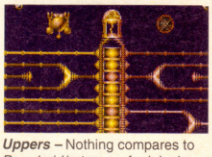
ORIENTAL GAMES
MicroStyle £24.99

Uppers – Joystick editor makes fighting user-friendly. ***Downers*** – So out-of-date it's wearing flares. ***The Bottom Line*** – Misleading title disguises a standard beat-'em-up. ★★

PANG
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – A perfect arcade conversion; novel two player mode and heaps of addictiveness make it the last word in cute games. ***Downers*** – The long wait between games is a bit of a bind. ***The Bottom Line*** – You'll be blowing bubbles forever. ★★★★★

PARADROID 90
Hewson £24.99



Uppers – Nothing compares to *Paradroid* in terms of original gameplay and elegant bas-relief graphics. ***Downers*** – Old C64 games players may be disappointed with the lack of new features. ***The Bottom Line*** – A five year old game idea, and it still wipes the floor with most competition. ★★★★★

PGA TOUR GOLF
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – Excellently presented, comprehensive, and easy as pie to get into. ***Downers*** – There's a limited amount of scope to any golf game, and *PGA* doesn't even try to transcend it. ***The Bottom Line*** – The pinnacle of Amiga golf so far. ★★★★★

PICK'N'PILE
Ubi Soft £19.99

Uppers – Fascinating mix of *Puzznic* and *Boulder Dash*. ***Downers*** – 8-bit graphics don't help visual clarity any. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not enough variation to sustain it for long. ★★

POLICE QUEST 2
Sierra (Activision) £34.95

Uppers – Er, very realistic sim of a policeman's lot. ***Downers*** – ie half the game is form-filling. ***The Bottom Line*** – Too much like a tedious day at the office. And a lot more expensive. ★★

POPULOUS
Electronic Arts £24.99
Uppers – Totally unique gameplay and smooth 3D isometric graphics add up to a game with depth and sparkle. ***Downers*** – The icon control system really is very confusing. ***The Bottom Line*** – An essential for all open-minded Amiga owners, though perhaps showing its age just a bit. ★★★★★

THE POWER
Demonware £24.99
Uppers – Heaps of levels and a screen designer keep lasting appeal up, and the music is excellent. ***Downers*** – A touch derivative, and lacks that indefinable something that makes a puzzle game great. ***The Bottom Line*** – Try before you buy – you might like it, but rather average to our eyes. ★★★

POWER DRIFT
Activision £19.99
Uppers – All the arcade's tracks, characters, and secret features. ***Downers*** – The graphics can get very confusing, and the gameplay isn't really that close to the original. ***The Bottom Line*** – A good stab at a very difficult (probably impossible) conversion, but not quite good enough. ★★★

POWERMONGER
Electronic Arts £29.99
Uppers – The brave new face of wargames... ***Downers*** – ...which looks suspiciously like *Populous*. ***The Bottom Line*** – Despite similarities to a certain other title, *Powermonger* really is an excellent game in its own right, though perhaps not as accessible. ★★★★

PP HAMMER AND HIS PNEUMATIC WEAPON
Demonware £25.53

Uppers – Nicely old-fashioned platform action. Plenty of scope for double entrendres too. ***Downers*** – Annoying niggles and a tendency towards over-complication spoil it a bit. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good, but it could easily have been a lot better. ★★★

PREHISTORIK
Titus £25.53

Uppers – Some excellent cartoon graphics and humorous touches make it an instantly likeable game. ***Downers*** – Suffers in comparison to *Toki* and *Chuck Rock*. Needs a number of rough edges polishing up. ***The Bottom Line*** – A nice enough little caveman romp, but it's not really an essential purchase. ★★★

PREDATOR 2
Image Works £25.99
Uppers – Lots and lots of zapping to be done and, er, that's about it really. ***Downers*** – Poor colour choice, unimaginative gameplay, bad control feel. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not as good as *Operation Wolf*, and now some £18 more expensive. Don't bother. ★★

PRINCE OF PERSIA
Broderbund £24.99
Uppers – Phenomenal animation, loads of atmosphere and some good old-fashioned gameplay. ***Downers*** – Control is initially tricky, and getting sent to the start of a level every time you die is always annoying. ***The Bottom Line*** – Technically stunning and great fun at the same time. Why can't all games be like this? ★★★★★

PROFLIGHT
Hi Soft £39.95

Uppers – Terrifyingly accurate – possibly the most accurate flight simulator ever. ***Downers*** – Such a good simulator that there isn't really room for any game at all. ***Bottom Line*** – Miles too realistic to be any fun to play. Still, it's less expensive than a real flying lesson. ★★

PRO TENNIS TOUR 2
Ubi Soft £24.99
Uppers – Possibly the most realistic sports sim to grace the Amiga, with features galore. ***Downers*** – So if you hate the real thing, you won't go for this. ***The Bottom Line*** – Nothing short of wonderful. ★★★★

PURSUIT TO EARTH
Exocet £19.95
Uppers – Reminiscent of *Gyruss*, the classic arcade zapper. ***Downers*** – But completely crap. ***The Bottom Line*** – About as much fun as getting hit by a real Exocet. ★

PUZZNIC
Ocean £24.99
Uppers – Classically simple and very addictive, not to mention original. ***Downers*** – Infuriatingly tough on later levels. ***The Bottom Line*** – Don't be put off by the useless graphics, this is a wonderful brain teaser. ★★★★

QUEST FOR GLORY II – TRIAL BY FIRE
Sierra £40.85
Uppers – Sorry, can't think of any. Oh no, wait, you do get lots of disks for your money. ***Downers*** – But no game to put on them. Incompetently programmed, dreadfully-designed, staggeringly-overpriced trash. ***The Bottom Line*** – Possibly the worst Amiga game you will ever see. Avoid it like an bad-tempered tiger with toothache. ★

RAILROAD TYCOON
MicroProse £29.99
Uppers – Frightening amount of depth. ***Downers*** – Very slow to get into (and very slow even when you *do* get into it). ***The Bottom Line*** – If you've got a lot of time to invest in it, well worth a look. ★★★★

RALLY CROSS CHALLENGE
Anco £19.95
Uppers – Well-programmed *Super Sprint* clone that's great fun with multiple players. ***Downers*** – Limited lastability. ***The Bottom Line*** – Still one of the best in its field, but that's more down to lack of competition than anything else. ★★

RANX
Ubi Soft £24.99
Uppers – Totally ideologically unsound. ***Downers*** – Totally ideologically unsound. ***The Bottom Line*** – Brilliantly-presented but ultimately limited comic strip beat-'em-up. And it's totally ideologically unsound. ★★

RBI TWO BASEBALL
Domark £29.99

Uppers – Excellent simulation of baseball, and beautifully presented to boot. ***Downers*** – Slightly over-priced and, because of the nature of the sport, not all that hot on lasting appeal. ***Bottom Line*** – Very good, but a bit limited, and not quite up there with the all-time classics. ★★★★

RENEGADE LEGION INTERCEPTOR
SSI/US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Military hardware a-go-go gives it instant RPG appeal. ***Downers*** – The strategy isn't deep enough, and the action sequences are way out of date. ***Bottom Line*** – Tales of galactic empires and warfare are a good idea, but this one just falls flat. The whole thing looks like it was written ten years ago. ★

REVELATION
Krisalis £19.99
Uppers – Neat idea – a puzzle game based on safe cracking. ***Downers*** – Too complex to just pick up and play – bad news for a puzzler. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not bad, but could have been better presented (and who thought up that utterly meaningless name?) ★★

RICK DANGEROUS 2
MicroStyle £24.99
Uppers – Cute, colourful, action packed, immensely playable and better paced than *Rick 1*... ***Downers*** – ...but really not all that dissimilar, and still packed with far too much in the way of unforeseeable danger. ***The Bottom Line*** – Loveable. ★★★

ROBOCOP 2
Ocean £24.99
Uppers – Great graphics, generally excellent presentation, and a nice 'clompy' robotic feel to the main character. ***Downers*** – Awkward controls, some infuriating gameplay traits, and it's all a touch too formulaic. ***The Bottom Line*** – Could have been a good deal better. ★★★

ROGUE TROOPER
Krisalis £24.99
Uppers – Fairly entertaining arcade adventure with devious but logical puzzles and an excellent free collectors' comic. ***Downers*** – One life – one mistake and you're all the way back to the start of the first level (Aaarrgh!) ***The Bottom Line*** – Good fun for the persistent, and a good licence for a change. ★★

R-TYPE II
Activision £25.99

Uppers – 99.99% arcade-perfect, and a beautiful and addictive shoot-'em-up in its own right. ***Downers*** – A couple of tiny bugs, and maybe off-puttingly difficult. (For wimps, anyway). ***Bottom Line*** – The best space blast for the Amiga yet, and possibly the best coin-op conversion too. Absolutely superb. ★★★★★

SATAN
Dinamic £19.99
Uppers – You won't finish it in a hurry. ***Downers*** – Spookily similar to *Black Tiger*. ***The Bottom Line*** – The game that put the 'age' in 'average'. ★★

SEARCH FOR THE KING
Accolade £34.99
Uppers – Superb Elvis gags and attention to detail (particularly in the graphics) mean graphic adventure fans will take to it immediately. ***Downers*** – Accolade blow it to a certain extent with their inefficient parser system. ***The Bottom Line*** – Still a long way to go before it competes with the likes of *The Secret Of Monkey Island*. ★★★

SHADOW OF THE BEAST 2
Psygnosis £34.95
Uppers – Jaw-dropping graphics, and, er, um... that's it. ***Downers*** – Your first few games will be shorter than the accessing pauses between them. The Roger Dean T-shirt is nauseous. ***The Bottom Line*** – £34.95? Get out of here! ★★

SHANGHAI
Activision £19.99
Uppers – Based on an ancient Chinese tile game, so you know it's going to torture your mind, and it does. Friendly presentation too, and the multi-player against-the-clock games are action-packed enough for the most frenzied blasting fan. ***Downers*** – Slightly fiddly graphics can play havoc with your eyes. ***The Bottom Line*** – Scarily gripping for a game with no moving graphics. The first time you do it you'll want to take out an advert in The Times to tell everybody. ★★★★★

SHOCKWAVE
Digital Magic £24.99
Uppers – Lightning fast arcade quality *Afterburner/Star Wars* graphics. ***Downers*** – Tactical sections get in the way. ***The Bottom Line*** – A potentially great arcade monster shoot-'em-up ruined by trying to be brainy as well. ★★★

SIMULCRA
MicroStyle £24.99
Uppers – Mad, frantic 3D blast. ***Downers*** – Not much brain-expanding involved. ***The Bottom Line*** – An amphetamine classic. ★★★

SIRIUS 7
CRL £24.99
Uppers – Technically adequate. ***Downers*** – No thought, no imagination, no game, no fun. ***The Bottom Line*** – Almost (but not quite) as action-packed as *Xenon 2*. In pause mode. With the monitor switched off. ★

SKI OR DIE
Electronic Arts £24.99
Uppers – *Skate Or Die* but with snow. ***Downers*** – *Skate Or Die* but with snow. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fun (for a while) with friends, but basically an old fashioned, patchy collection of unimpressive sub games. ★

SKULL AND CROSSBONES
Domark £24.99
Uppers – It's all reasonably true to the coin-op. ***Downers*** – Pity it was so crap then, isn't it? Appallingly slow, critically limited and bug-ridden. ***The Bottom Line*** – You'd have more fun being keelhauled. ★

SPEEDBALL II
Image Works £24.99
Uppers – The ultimate future sport game to date – fast, brutal, enormously playable. The Bitmaps' finest moment. ***Downers*** – Teams can be hard to tell apart in the heat of the action. ***The Bottom Line*** – Buy or die. ★★★★★

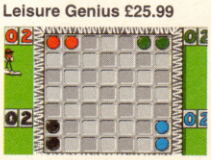
SPELLBOUND
Psyclapse £24.99
Uppers – Well-drawn backdrops, and, erm, the packaging is nice. ***Downers*** – Almost no in-game sound, practically nothing in the way of action. ***The Bottom Line*** – Hugely boring arcade adventure thing that's overpriced by £20. ★

THE SPY WHO LOVED ME
Domark £24.99
Uppers – Lovely tiny graphics, tough gameplay that nonetheless rewards a bit of effort. ***Downers*** – Only half-a-dozen levels – all completable after some practice – means it won't last all that long. ***The Bottom Line*** – Easily the best Bond game so far, and a fun *Spy Hunter* clone into the bargain, though not something you'll play for months. ★★★

SPINDIZZY WORLDS
Activision £24.99
Uppers – Another example of an 8-bit classic brought bang up to date with a sprawling play area and loads of new features. ***Downers*** – Bizarre controls to get to grips with and the graphics could be better. ***The Bottom Line*** – Superlative game design, and total addiction. Frustrating as hell, but nonetheless a masterpiece. ★★★★★

SPIRIT OF EXCALIBUR
Virgin £24.99
Uppers – Plenty of variation, and it certainly all looks lovely. ***Downers*** – Pitifully slow, and the different sections don't really seem to gel together. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you've got a few hours to kill while you're waiting for a train, this is a game that you can load up without fear of it causing you to miss it. (On the other hand, standing on the platform might be more fun). ★★

SPOT
Leisure Genius £25.99



Uppers – Brilliantly-designed *Othello*-based board game which still manages to offer something new and different (and even supports up to four players). ***Downers*** – The presentation lacks polish in places. ***The Bottom Line*** – A class board-like strategy act. ★★★★★

STARGLIDER II
Rainbird £24.99
Uppers – Instant 3D blasting appeal, with extra depth for those who want it. ***Downers*** – Slightly too repetitive in the long-term. ***The Bottom Line*** – Still one of the best *Star Wars*-inspired releases on the Amiga. ★★★

ST. DRAGON
Storm £24.99
Uppers – Lovely graphics, a helpful software autofire option, and a challenging difficulty curve lift this out of the morass of horizontal zappers. The Dynamic Loading System is an infinitely wonderful idea. ***Downers*** – A bit too tough for most, and the power-ups are unexciting. ***The Bottom Line*** – One of the few sideways-scrolling shoot-'em-ups that you really should own. ★★★★

STELLAR 7
Dynamix (Sierra) £24.99
Uppers – Appealingly old-fashioned blast from the past in the form of (yet another!) up-dated *Battlezone*. ***Downers*** – Ever-so-slightly sluggish vector graphics and optimistic pricing make it a bit of a luxury. ***The Bottom Line*** – Satisfyingly mindless – but that's both a strength and a weakness. ★★

STORMBALL
Millennium £24.99
Uppers – Reasonably passable graphics. ***Downers*** – Utterly dire game design, no feeling of speed or excitement, highly confusing and largely pointless. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you're looking for a good way to waste £25, throw it down a drain rather than buy this. ★

STRIDER 2
US Gold £24.99
Uppers – Good animation and plenty of challenge. ***Downers*** – Very little advance on *Strider*, and shoddily presented. ***The Bottom Line*** – It's everything that's bad about sequels, and bears all the hallmarks of a rush job. ★★

STUN RUNNER
Tengen (Domark) £24.99
Uppers – Er...the music isn't entirely crap. ***Downers*** – Hopelessly slow, graphically primitive, plus there's a very terminal lack of excitement. ***The Bottom Line*** – We'd rather see a great conversion of *Galaxians* than someone make a pig's ear of a game they knew they couldn't convert in the first place. ★

SUPER MONACO GP
US Gold £24.99
Uppers – Well-programmed and fun. ***Downers*** – Bears very little resemblance to the coin-op. ***The Bottom Line*** – A very good racing game, but don't expect the arcade. ★★★

SUPER OFF-ROAD RACER
Virgin £19.99
Uppers – Flawless arcade conversion. ***Downers*** – The track sequence, though identical to the original, is silly (four of the first eight races are on track 1), the difficulty curve is steep, and control is just a tad over-sensitive. ***The Bottom Line*** – The Amiga's best *Super Sprint* game yet, but with some annoying niggles that stop it

being the true classic it might have been. ★★★★

SUPER SKWEEK
Loriciel £19.99

Uppers – Cute *Defusion/Painter*-based game with power-ups and add-ons galore. ***Downers*** – Perhaps a little to French for most of us. ***The Bottom Line*** – Could do with having another fiver chopped off the price, but otherwise great fun. ★★★

SUPER WONDER BOY
Activision £19.99

Uppers – Perfect difficulty curve lets you get just a little bit further every go. Cute graphics add to the charm and the shops where you can spend your gold give it a little extra scope. ***Downers*** – Slightly lacking in action, too slow for some. Not exactly modern looking. ***The Bottom Line*** – Great game in the *Mario* vein, but with less enemies and more depth. ★★★

SWITCHBLADE II
Gremlin £25.99

Uppers – Gorgeous console-like graphics, tried-and-tested gameplay, packed full of detail and lovely touches. ***Downers*** – Perhaps just a little too simple. ***The Bottom Line*** – Absolutely superb. Arguably the best Amiga platform game to date. ★★★★★

SWIV
Storm £24.99

Uppers – Looks good, sounds good, comes with a neat two-player option – and all in one (massive) level too! ***Downers*** – There aren't any (unless you find all those drab military-style colours a bit depressing). ***The Bottom Line*** – Frantic – one of the best shoot-'em-ups we've seen. ★★★★★

SWORDS AND GALLEONS
Idea £25.99

Uppers – Uses the classic trading game style to. great effect. ***Downers*** – Easy to complete and the stupid omission of a save game option. ***The Bottom Line*** – A minority interest sort of affair. ★★

TANGRAM
Thalion £25.53

Uppers – Perfectly adequate computer translation of the classic Oriental puzzle. ***Downers*** – ...unfortunately it's a really dumb idea for a conversion, and the extras (time limit and suchlike) are intrusive and pointless. ***Bottom Line*** – Getting a real wooden Tangram set would be more fun, as well as much cheaper. ★

TETRIS
Infogrames £19.99

Uppers – Well, it is still *Tetris*. ***Downers*** – But it's probably the worst version yet seen on the Amiga, and that's saying something. ***The Bottom Line*** – Completely stinky. (Stick with the PD versions). ★

THEME PARK MYSTERY
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Great feel; looks and sounds lovely. ***Downers*** – Arcade sections are fairly pointless. ***The Bottom Line*** – Games which mix adventures with arcade sequences always suffer for it. ★★

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND
US Gold £25.99

Uppers – The closest thing yet to a fully interactive story. Enormous playability, pleasing puzzles and great dollops of – yes! – genuinely witty humour come together to form something very glorious indeed. ***Downers*** – Despite the five disks, you'll still need a full meg, and once the game is completed you'll probably never come back to it again. ***The Bottom Line*** – An adventure that looks and plays better than almost any arcade game. Software heaven.★★★★★

TEAM SUZUKI
Gremlin £24.99

Uppers – Very fast, with some pretty hairy track views. Unintentionally hilarious replay feature. ***Downers*** – Insanely sensitive to control. ***The Bottom Line*** – Enough fun to keep you playing until you can at least stay on the road for five seconds at 60mph, but a bit too unrealistic to compete with *Indy 500*. ★★★

TEAM YANKEE
Empire £29.99

Uppers – The action slant on the standard tank sim makes it more immediate and accessible... ***Downers*** – ...but what a pity it lacks depth and excitement. ***The Bottom Line*** – Doesn't work as a strategy sim or arcade blast. Try *Sherman M4* if you must try own a tank simulation of some description. ★★

TEENAGE MUTANT HERO TURTLES
Mirrorsoft £24.99

Uppers – It doesn't have the word 'Ninja' in the title...***Downers*** – ...but even that doesn't save it from being utterly awful in every way. ***The Bottom Line*** – You'd have more fun playing with a real turtle. Or a real mutant. ★

TOKI
Ocean £25.39

Uppers – The (latest) definitive coin-op conversion. Beautiful platform action to make you go ape. ***Downers*** – The sound is slightly disappointing, and the game is simply too small. ***The Bottom Line*** – What's there is brilliant, if only there was more of it. ★★★★★

TORVAK THE WARRIOR
Core Design £24.99

Uppers – Beautiful, gloomy graphics. ***Downers*** – Incredibly slow and unremarkable *Rastan* game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Unresponsive control and a talentless hero cripple the gameplay. Check out *Chuck Rock* to find out what Core can really do. ★

TOTAL RECALL
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – A fair bit of gameplay variation. ***Downers*** – Unfriendly controls, uninspired design. ***The Bottom Line*** – Solid but unexciting. No feel for the movie. (And couldn't they afford the rights to use Arnie's real face?) ★★

TOURNAMENT GOLF
Elite £24.99

Uppers – Authentic arcade port. ***Downers*** – Nobody ever played the arcade game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Completely average golfing yawnerama. ★★

TOWER FRA
Thalion £24.99

Uppers – Yes, you guessed it, it's an air traffic control tower simulation. Not as boring as it sounds. ***Downers*** – It's still fairly boring though. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good training for the next generation of air traffic controllers. ★★

TOYOTA CELICA RALLY
Gremlin £24.99

Uppers – Very impressively detailed – a lot of effort has been taken to get an authentic feel here. ***Downers*** – Be prepared to dig deep to find the actual game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Perhaps too good a simulation to be much fun to play. ★★

3D CONSTRUCTION KIT
Domark/Incentive £49.99

Uppers – Creating your own games (or simply designing little worlds) is great fun. ***Downers*** – Well, it's not really a game as such, is it? It's pretty slow too, and making anything really worthwhile gets very complicated. ***The Bottom Line*** – Expensive and of limited appeal, but if you've always itched to create a Freescape game you can't really complain. ★★★

TURRICAN 2
Rainbow Arts £24.99

Uppers – Enjoyable mindless blasting. ***Downers*** – Erm, has there been some mistake here? Someone appears to have sent us a copy of *Turrican*. ***The Bottom Line*** – Better than the original, but that's the only way in which it's different. ★★★

ULTIMA V
Origin (Mindscape) £29.99

Uppers – The scope and depth of *Ultima V* goes way beyond other role-playing adventures, even previous *Ultima* releases. ***Downers*** – Not a bit of joystick action in sight; some may find the size of the game daunting. ***The Bottom Line*** – *Ultima V* offers arguably the best in graphic fantasy (at least until *Ultima VI* comes along). ★★★★★

ULTIMATE RIDE
Mindscape £24.99

Uppers – Realistic handling. ***Downers*** – Dreadful gameplay.***The Bottom Line*** – Another failed attempt at the accuracy/fun game balance. ★★

UMS II
Rainbird (MicroProse) £34.99

Uppers – The pinnacle of tech-head wargames, with more user-definable bits than you could ever need. ***Downers*** – Atrocious documentation could mentally scar beginners for life. ***The Bottom Line*** – It won't win the wargaming fraternity any new members, but it'll put some in seventh heaven. ★★★

VAXINE
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Beautiful-looking, original and imaginative shoot-'em-up. ***Downers*** – Very, very, very (very) hard. ***The Bottom Line*** – Be prepared to tear your hair out. ★★★★

VECTOR CHAMPIONSHIP RUN
Impulze £24.99

Uppers – Pretty speedy. ***Downers*** – Uncontrollable. ***The Bottom Line*** – What's the point in a game you can't play? (c.f. Rhetorical Questions For Journalists, Vol. 1) ★

VIZ
Virgin £24.99

Uppers – Very true to the comic. ***Downers*** – Very shallow and limited. The jokes only really work the first time you see them. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fun while it lasts, but after the first couple of hours you've seen all it's got to offer. ★★

VOODOO NIGHTMARE
Palace £24.99

Uppers – Clear, sharp graphics. ***Downers*** – Maddeningly sensitive controls. ***The Bottom Line*** – A nice change – an average game. ★★

WARLOCK THE AVENGER
Millennium £24.99

Uppers – Playable and quite engrossing scrolling arcade adventure romp. ***Downers*** – An 8-bit game in 16-bit's clothing. ***The Bottom Line*** – *Druid* slightly updated for the 90s, and not by any stretch of the imagination worth £25. ★★

WARZONE
Core Design £20.99

Uppers – Graphics have a degree of character to them, and it's pretty tough. ***Downers*** – Adds very little to the hackneyed *Ikari Warriors* format. ***The Bottom Line*** – Competent but deadly dull shoot-'em-up that you've seen a dozen times before. ★★

WHITE SHARKS
Demonware £24.99

Uppers – Exceptionally good graphics, novel 'choose-your-own-power-ups' weapon system. ***Downers*** – Too fast to have any decent feel, and incredibly unimaginative.***The Bottom Line*** – The game that put the 'bog standard' into 'bog standard shoot-'em-up'. Duff. ★★

WILDLIFE
MD Production £19.99

Uppers – Ideologically sound. ***Downers*** – *Operation Wolf* without shooting is like swimming without water. ***The Bottom Line*** – Utterly desperate. ★

WINGS
Cinemaware £29.99

Uppers – Authentic WW1 feel, perhaps their most cinematic release to date. ***Downers*** – Ludicrous disk swapping. Very little gameplay. ***The Bottom Line*** – Far too simple for a sim, and too expensive for what it is. ★★

WINGS OF DEATH
Thalion £24.99

Uppers – Range of power-ups is good, even including power-downs! ***Downers*** – Not the most innovative game ever. ***The Bottom Line*** – Almost as much fun as *Xenon 2*, though not as pretty. ★★★

WOLFPACK
Mirrorsoft £24.99

Uppers – Very deep (ho ho). ***Downers*** – Sub sims never score very highly on the thrillometer, and this one is no exception. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not as overly tech-biased as many in the genre, but still not one to recommend to the hardened action junkies. ★★

WONDERLAND
Virgin £24.95

Uppers – An evocative telling of the classic Lewis Carrol tale utilising a pretty advanced Mac-style user-interface. ***Downers*** – Unless you've got a very powerful Amiga with a screen that can handle interlace, the whole thing is very unwieldy. It's not got the best parser in the world either. ***The Bottom Line*** – Brave, but after all the hype the product is something of a let-down. Not a patch on (it's that game again) *The Secret Of Monkey Island*. ★★★

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SOCCER
Elite £24.99

Uppers – Very good copy of the coin-op (sob). ***Downers*** – Poor playability, you never get two seconds on the ball. ***The Bottom Line*** – Knocked out in the first round. ★★

WRATH OF THE DEMON
Readysoft £29.99

Uppers – Cheaper than *Shadow Of The Beast II*. ***Downers*** – Almost exactly the same in every other respect, even down to inclusion of a spiffing intro sequence. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you liked *Shadow Of The Beast II* you'll already have bought it, so you won't need this. Otherwise a good alternative. ★★

WRECKERS
Audiogenic £24.99

Uppers – Some refreshing game ideas add a new angle to the old 'aliens-overrun-the-space station' story. ***Downers*** – The whole thing feels far too much like an 8-bit game. ***The Bottom Line*** – All the elements of a really good game are there – they just haven't been tied together properly. ★★

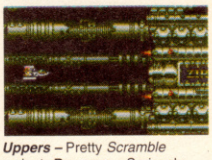
XIPHOS
Electronic Zoo £24.99

Uppers – Silky smooth and subtle. ***Downers*** – Takes far too long to get into the action. ***The Bottom Line*** – Only for the dedicated space trader. ★★

ZARATHRUSTA
Hewson £24.99

Uppers – The *Thrust* gameplay is timeless, and it's been updated with 1990s graphics, resulting in something very special indeed. ***Downers*** – At heart though, it's still a game that used to sell for £1.99 going for £25, which isn't a bargain in anyone's language. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good fun, but to be honest, not really very good value. ★★★

ZIRIAX
The Software Business £24.99



Uppers – Pretty *Scramble* variant. ***Downers*** – Seriously overloaded in the difficulty department. ***The Bottom Line*** – Stupidly difficult, too much for almost everyone. More suited to a budget release. ★★

Z-OUT
Rainbow Arts £24.99

Uppers – A huge improvement on *X-Out*. ***Downers*** – The horizontally scrolling shoot-'em-up with knobs on thing has already been done to death. ***The Bottom Line*** – A better *R-Type* than *R-Type*, but it isn't different enough to make it stand out from the crowd. ★★★

The Midnight Oil

Whew! What a summer. No, obviously not the weather, but for British football. On June 9th, I cheered myself hoarse at Wembley as the Monarchs took the first World Bowl. A few weeks earlier, Man. Utd. proved the "experts" all wrong about the quality of British soccer, when they easily beat Barcelona in the European Cup Winners Cup Final. United played 9 European matches without a single defeat. And now, a new NFL season, and Arsenal, Spurs, Liverpool and United back in Europe. Football's back!!!!

It's been a busy summer for game design too. In 1983 I wrote my first game "League Division One" for the BBC Micro. Subsequently "Mexico '86", "Soccer Supremo" and "Rome '90" appeared. But it was "Division One '85" that really hit the button for most fans. It was the game, unlike any other computer soccer game I know, which took soccer seriously. So, this summer, it had to be "Div One '92" for the Amiga and ST computers. It's six times the size of "85" and I believe it will have the same impact. Call me if you want to chat about it.

Malcolm Howard

DIVISION ONE '92

"HUGELY ENJOYABLE, BUT DANGEROUSLY ADDICTIVE."
Dr. Trevor Harley, psychologist

Soccer management is about judgement. Judgement of a player's skills and the combination of skills that make up an effective team. Judgement of an opposition's skills and the tactics that will ensure that your team's skills overcome those of the opposition. This season's league champions will be managed by the guy whose judgement proves correct more often than that of his fellow managers.

"Division One '92" will give you the opportunity to pit your judgement against the computer simulated managers and teams of the English first division. As new manager you must, initially, make the best of the squad of players that your predecessor has left. But, through the youth squad, the reserve squad, and the transfer market, you have the opportunity to assemble a squad that plays your type of football. Success through the seasons will be your responsibility. The first division, the FA Cup, the League Cup and the three European titles are there for the taking.....for the right manager.

HEADCOACH V3

"IT'S A PITY TO CALL THIS JUST A GAME"
A & B Computing

The new NFL season is looking fascinating. The Bills, the Bears. the Raiders and the Chiefs all looked good last season, and with the 49'ers returning to earth, and the Giants likely to be affected by Bill Parcells joining Bill Walsh in the commentary box, the SuperBowl could go to one of many teams. And who will be the top coach this season?

"HeadCoach V3" has been designed for lesser mortals, like you and me, to pit their wits and knowledge of American Football against the giants (sorry about that) of the game. Through the seasons you will need to build a 45 man squad to allow a gameplan design that will overcome any team in the NFL. SuperBowl glory can be yours, then you can join the Bills (sorry again) or go on to build yet another squad, and take yet another SuperBowl. The team and coach of the nineties haven't yet been decided. Time to stake your claim?

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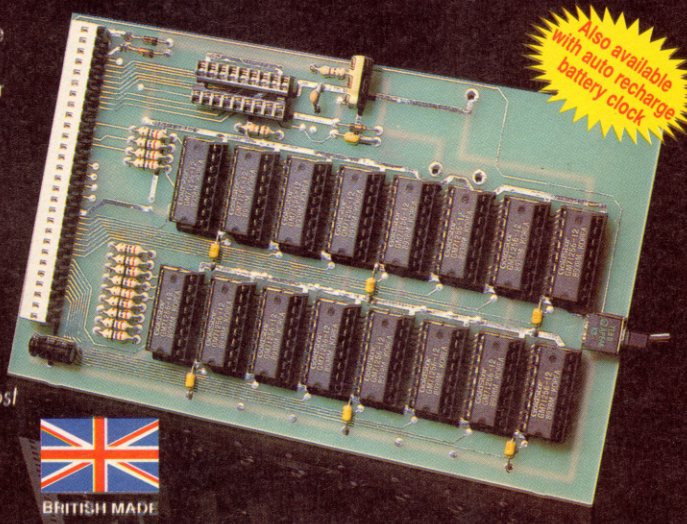

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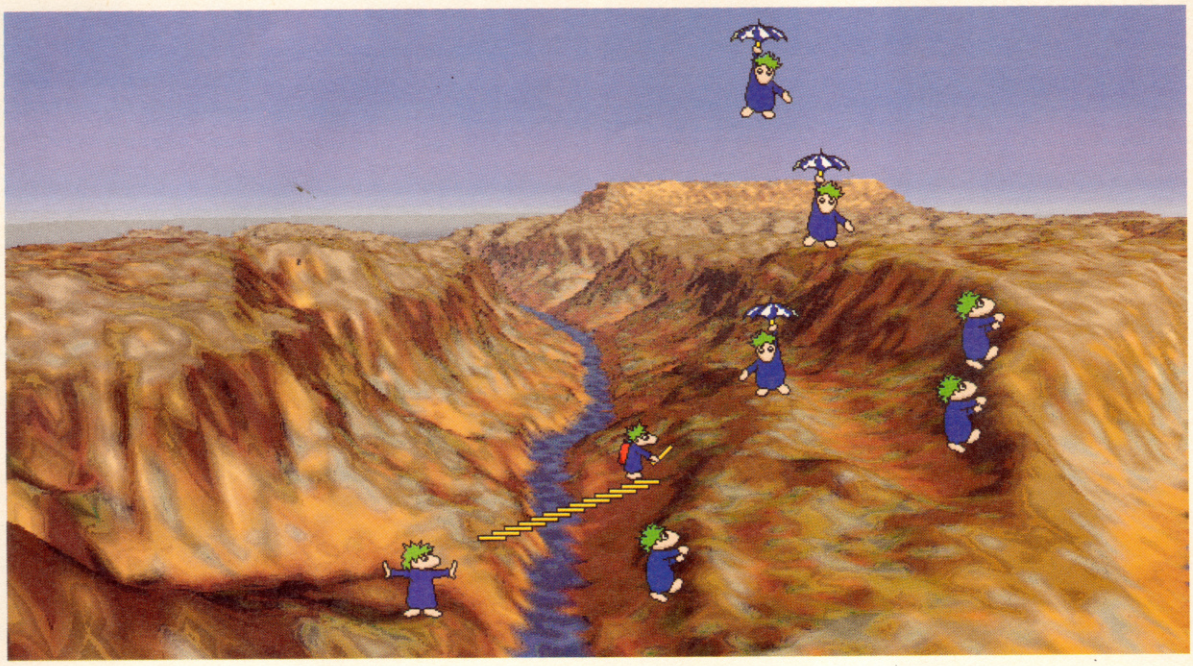
You reckon good graphics stop at 32 colours?



Get real!

Amazing game, that Lemmings. Those little fellers are so cute, aren't they? Incredible what some of these game programmers can do with a 32-colour Amiga game.

But why stop there? Don't you realise that the Amiga can do a whole lot more besides? Yeah, sure, there's the famous HAM painting programs that help you create pictures with 4,096 realistic colours in, which is good stuff. But is it good enough?

Not any more, no! The very latest thing in computer graphics is 24-bit colour, a cunning combination of hardware trickery and software excellence that lets you create pictures with up to 320,000 colours on screen, from a palette of more than 16 million. It's known as True Colour, because you can make pictures that look as real as the best colour photographs.

Which is why our Lemmings are traversing a grand canyon that really looks like the Grand Canyon, even though it's an imaginary landscape created entirely by the Amiga and an £80 program called Vista.

If you want to be in on the very latest thing in Amiga graphics - the very latest thing in computer graphics, full stop! - then you need to check out the next issue. Get up to date with a scene that's really going places!

You mustn't miss Amiga Format Issue 27, on sale September 12
Don't get left behind as Amiga graphics enters a new era!

AMIGA FORMAT

WIN THIS MONITOR!

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF

AMIGA POWER Reader Survey

(AND MAYBE WIN A PHILIPS COLOUR MONITOR!)

We're five issues old now, so it's about time we found out what you think – about the mag, about Amiga games, about, ooh, the computer industry in general. What you tell us now will affect the way we put together the magazine in the future, so it's well worth your while taking part – especially when it won't even cost you the price of a stamp (the address is FREEPOST, you see) AND you get a chance to win £270 worth of Philips colour monitor!

So what exactly is it I could win? Well, it's a Philips CM8833/11 model (whatever that means), which just happens to be the most popular monitor amongst Amiga owners across Europe – a nifty piece of kit alright, and about 100 times better than linking your Amiga up to a poxy old TV. In fact, it's so good we use three of them in the AMIGA POWER offices. That's not all though – those nice Philips people have bunged in a free copy of *F-19 Stealth Fighter* with it too!

Anyway, that's enough puffery – just grab a biro, clear a space on the kitchen table, and get ready to reveal all..!

Just fill out this form and send it (or a photocopy if you don't want to rip your mag) to:
AMIGA POWER Reader Survey
FREEPOST
29 Monmouth Street,
Bath
Avon BA1 2XF

Okay, to kick off with it's THE USUAL BIT

Name_____

Address _____

1. How old are you?
- Under 10
- 10-14
- 15-19
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40 or over

2. Are you:
- Male?
- Female?

3. Are you:
- At school
- At college/university
- Unemployed
- In full time employment

4. If in full time employment do you earn:
- Less than £5000 a year
- £5000-£8000
- £8000-£12000
- £12000-£16000
- £16000-£20000
- Over £20000

YOU AND YOUR AMIGA

5. How long have you owned an Amiga?
- Less than six months
- Between six months and a year
- Between a year and two years
- Between two and three years
- More than three years

6. Do you own...
- A straight Amiga 500?
- An upgraded Amiga 500?
- An Amiga 1000, 2000 or (ahem) 3000?

7. List your five fave Amiga games ever...
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

8. Do you have a favourite games publisher?
_____

9. Do you have a favourite programmer or programming team?
_____

10. How many full price games will you buy in the next three months?
- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-20
- 21-30
- More (!)

11. How many budget games will you buy in the next twelve months?
- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-20
- 21-30
- More(!)

12. How much do you spend on games every month?
- Less than a fiver
- Less than a tenner
- £10-20
- £20-30
- £30-40
- £40-50
- £50-£100
- More than £100 (!)

13. On average, how much time do you spend playing games a week?
- Less than two hours
- 2-4 hours
- 5-9 hours
- 10-15 hours
- 16-20 hours
- More than 20 hours

14. How often do you buy Public Domain games?
- All the time
- Every now and again
- Rarely
- Never

15. Which of the following has the most influence on your choice of the games you buy? (List 1 to 6)
- AMIGA POWER reviews
- Reviews generally
- Advertising
- Packaging
- Word of mouth
- A hunch

16.List the computer magazines you buy regularly and rate them out of ten?
- AMIGA POWER
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

17. If you rated any of these magazines higher than AMIGA POWER, in what way are they better?
_____

18.Do you a) own any of these machines? b)intend to buy any of them over the next six months

	a	b
Spectrum	☐	☐
C64	☐	☐
Amstrad CPC	☐	☐
Atari ST	☐	☐
Sega Master	☐	☐
Sega Megadrive	☐	☐
Nintendo	☐	☐
Super Famicom	☐	☐
Neo Geo	☐	☐
PC	☐	☐
CDTV	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐

YOU AND AMIGA POWER

19.How often do you buy AMIGA POWER?
- Subscriber
- Every month without fail
- Most months
- Every now and again
- This is the first one I've bought

20. If you've subscribed or are thinking about subscribing, are you more attracted by:
- The free game
- Money-off offers
- The guarantee of getting your copy every month without traipsing around the shops.

21. How many people read your copy of AMIGA POWER?
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- More

22. Give us an 'out of ten' rating for each section in this issue of AMIGA POWER
- ☐ Cover
- ☐ Disk
- ☐ Contents
- ☐ Disk pages
- ☐ True Stories
- ☐ Crib Sheets
- ☐ Oh Dear!
- ☐ Charts
- ☐ Who do we think we are?
- ☐ Two and three page game reviews (p22-38)
- ☐ Complete Control (in general)
- ☐ Complete Control – *Prince Of Persia* Guide
- ☐ Complete Control – *Gods* Guide
- ☐ Peter Molyneux/*Populous* feature
- ☐ Gremlin Work In Progress
- ☐ If we'd known then...
- ☐ Game reviews (p70-76)
- ☐ Budget reviews
- ☐ PD reviews
- ☐ Letters
- ☐ *Simpsons* Competition
- ☐ The Bottom Line
- ☐ Second Opinion

23. Which ONE of these features from previous issues NOT in this issue would you like to see more of:
- Giant Preview Sections
- In The Style Of...
- Talking Heads interviews
- In-depth programmer interviews
- CDTV Covereage

24. What other topics do you think we should cover?
_____

25. Give us a rating out of ten for each program on the cover disk:
- ☐ *Barbarian II*
- ☐ *Metagalactic Llamas*
- ☐ *XFire*
- ☐ *King*
- ☐ *Amigoids*
- ☐ *Raps*

26. What would you like to see changed about the magazine?
_____

27. What would you like to see changed about the cover disk?
_____

IT'S THE IRRELEVANT BIT

28. What's your favourite:
Movie _____
Band _____
Non computer mag _____

Thank you for your time.

AMIGA POWER BACK ISSUES

Copies of the first three issues of AMIGA POWER are still available – though perhaps not for long! Each one costs £3.50 including packing and postage within the UK. To order yours simply fill out the form opposite and send it with a cheque or postal order. (Everything else you need to know is explained on the form).

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Plus! On the disk: ***Bombuzal*** – the complete game!

2 June 1991 *Creation, 'Bob', Populous II* – Bullfrog interviewed; 20 Amiga classics for £10.99 or less; Eric Matthews; *Rainbow Islands* continued; over 40 new games reviewed, including *Monkey Island, Switchblade II, Hero Quest, Wonderland...*

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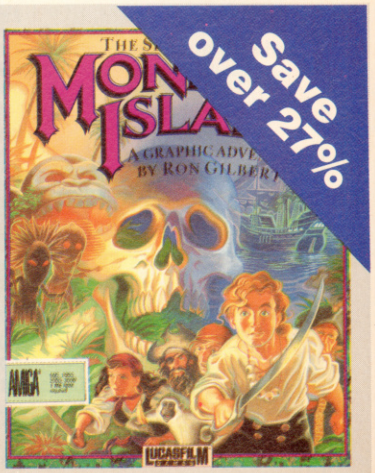

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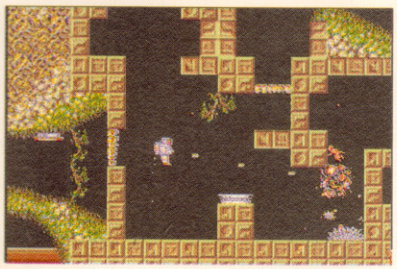
EXILE

We presented an excellent playable demo on last month's cover disk, now here's your chance to get completely embroiled in the fascinating world of Audiogenic's incredible *Exile*, the future of arcade adventures.

AP rated at 89 per cent.



MEGA-LO-MANIA

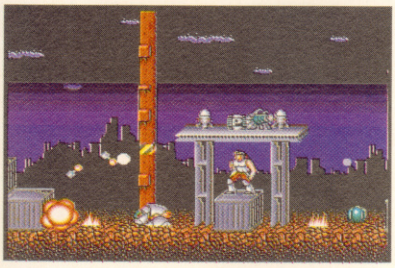
This month's highest rating game, the incredible *Mega lo Mania* from Image Works, makes the 'god-sim' genre more accessible than ever before. Fast, engrossing gameplay, hilarious sound and an incredible hook factor make it perhaps the most unputdownable game of the year!

AP rated 90 percent

SWITCHBLADE II

Gorgeous pseudo-Japanese graphics, wonderful scrolling and playability coming out of its ears – that's Gremlin's simply stunning *Switchblade II*, perhaps the Amiga's best ever arcade-style platform game.

AP rated 87 per cent.



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SECOND OPINION

SEAN KELLY OF GREMLIN

Sean Kelly is Product Manager at Gremlin, looking after the day to day running of all sorts of games, including recent hits like *Hero Quest* and *Switchblade II*, as well as having a hand in the development of *Utopia*, *Daemonsgate*, and other up-and-coming potential hits.

The interesting thing about Sean though is that he's not always been in games development. Oh no, he used to be a journalist, reviewing games for *Your Sinclair* , before taking staff jobs at (first) *CU Amiga*, and eventually *Zero*, where he became dep ed. What this means is that Sean's played and evaluated in his time more games than any sane man ought to. It also means that he's seen the industry from both sides – as a games reviewer giving harsh criticism, and as a developer knowing what the limitations are – making him the ideal person to ask to pick a wodge of recent(ish) Amiga titles and then tell us what he thinks of them. Or at least, that's what we thought...

'You're not going to be very pleased with me,' Sean begins. 'You see, I'm so busy these days I hardly get to play any games.'

But your whole life's games, Sean, we protest. You live, breath, sleep and eat them – you must have opinions on at least a few. Give it your best shot, eh? (And he did).

NAVY SEALS
Ocean

I played this on the Amiga quite recently actually and it was, well, alright. There are some nice effects in it, that's for sure – like the way the guys climb up onto the overhead walkways and so on – but it was disappointing because it was so very much a typical Ocean film licence.

***Navy Seals* from Ocean**

They've done it before and much better – with *Batman* and *RoboCop* for instance – and now they seem to be churning out just the same thing again and again. It's not so much a bad game, just not one of their best, and the fact that it's tied to such a weak film doesn't help matters any either. *RoboCop* was such a strong central character he was immediately identifiable on screen all the time, whereas who on earth knows who these guys are meant to be? If I was still reviewing games I suppose I'd give it in the high 70s, but then I'm probably a lot more generous than you lot anyway..

LEMMINGS
Psygnosis

I know this one has been talked about to death, but, you know, I can't really see what all the fuss is about. When it first came out I thought it was alright and very novel, certainly, and I still think that – I'm just not very excited by it. Sure, the little *Lemming* people are genuinely funny to watch as they dig or hold up those umbrellas or whatever, and you do find yourself getting involved in what they're doing, but at the end of the day it's just a puzzle game, and we've seen an awful lot of those lately, haven't we? The fact is, I find it quite quickly gets fairly dull just clicking on lots of little blokes and then watching them do things.

***Lemmings* from Psygnosis**

The intro sequence isn't the best Psygnosis have done either, but then you're almost tempted to say thank God for that – I hate the idea that stuff is going out on the strength of the intro sequence.

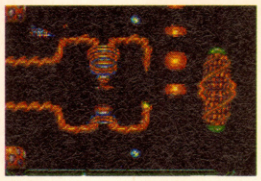
The other thing that gets me – and this isn't just a problem with *Lemmings* – is the packaging. It comes in this gigantic box you could practically move a house in, and all you've got inside are a couple of disks and some bits of paper. It's getting a bit barmy the way everyone thinks big boxes equals premium product, even when there's no book inside or any real reason for it at all, but then we're just as guilty, I guess. *Utopia*, *Daemonsgate* and *Flag* will all go out in enormously over-sized packaging.

THE AMAZING SPIDERMAN
Empire

It's quite old, I know, but I've really got into it – I just picked it off the shelf because of the comic character, but was very impressed by the way that they resisted the temptation to go for big sprites and impressive graphics and instead placed the character in a computer game. It reminded me of *Bruce Lee* on the C64 more than anything – so what if Spidey is really small and weedy looking, the game itself really works. I can even live with the way his body turns into a skeleton as you lose energy at the side of the screen too!

TV SPORTS: FOOTBALL
Mirror Image

When this first came out I thought 'Oh no, it's all about American Football – I can't handle that.' My loss. I've been going to London Monarchs games recently and have really got into American Footie, so I went back to *TV Sports: Football*, and yes, it's really very good. The TV Sports series are generally of a pretty high quality anyway – it's great to see games like this now coming out at a budget price – and I dare say I'll be playing this for quite some time. At least until *John Madden's Football* hits the Amiga anyway!



***Armalyte* from Thalamus**

ARMALYTE
Thalamus

Yeah, the new Thalamus thing – I was quite impressed by the look of this, but it's a bit hard, isn't it? Far too hard for me, that's for sure. And have you seen what happens when you die – you get this ridiculous animated sequence pop up all the time and means it's ages before you get back in the game! Goodness knows why Arc Developments have done that – they normally do a very impressive job. I like their *R-Type II*, though for me nothing comes close to *R-Type* on the Spectrum. That's my favourite shoot-'em-up ever.

F-19 STEALTH FIGHTER
MicroProse

Now this is a really excellent game, simply so well presented and so professional – it shows you what top-end games should really be like. I've heard people complain that it can get too easy if you're good at it simply because the plane's so sophisticated, but I've certainly not found that. For me the game has lots of depth, especially as you can pretend you're taking part in recent events. In fact, I wouldn't be at all surprised if there was a Gulf War Mission disk winging its way across the Atlantic towards us any day now...

'*Navy Seals*... was so very much a typical Ocean film licence.'

TOKI
Ocean

A great turn-your-brain-off-and-play game, and really pretty good. It's just what you want from an arcade game, and it's very easy on the eye too.

I really like this sort of gameplay anyway – to be honest, when you're working in this industry, it's not all that often that you want to go home and get yourself embroiled in lots of really complicated, involved strategy stuff. Far better to sit down, turn you brain off and kill lots of horrible little creatures.

POPULOUS
Electronic Arts

Yes, this is really ancient, I know, but I just love the game. I played it to death when it first came out – a really unique concept, and they pulled it off so well. It's one that comes up a lot in conversations about *Utopia* of course, though I don't really think *Utopia* – and I suspect any of the other 3D isometric games around at the moment – has all that much to do with *Populous* anyway. The viewpoint aside, *Utopia* really has more in common with *Sim City* – it's the indirect control, the influencing of people in such relatively subtle ways, that makes the difference. This was so original when it came out, and I still think it stands in a field of its own now.

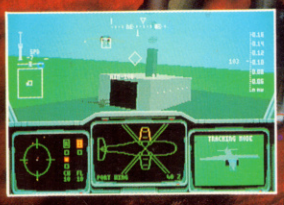
SWITCHBLADE II
Gremlin

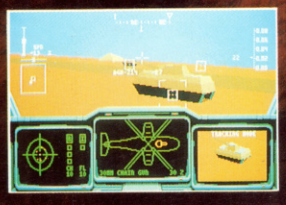
Yes, I know it's one of ours, but you never really feel like playing a game when you've just finished development of it – it's best to leave it a while and then go back to it. Anyway, that's what I've done with *Switchblade II* recently, and, d'you know, I've really enjoyed it. Nice brainless fun, and so different from the first game. It feels big too, like you're getting a lot for your money. But then I would say that, wouldn't I?

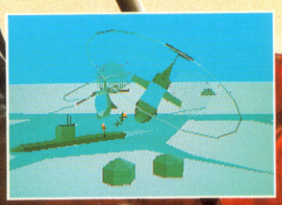
NEXT ISSUE: The October issue of AMIGA POWER will be 'hitting' the shops on September 26th. It'll feature a great cover disk, the usual fabulous reviews and – yes! – another extra free gift! Order your copy now!

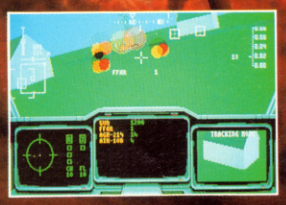
THUNDERHAWK

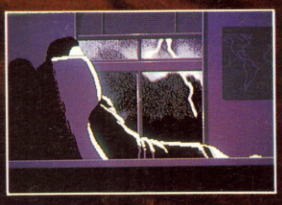
AH-73M











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NEXT MONTH! The 'obstreperous' October issue of AMIGA POWER will be making an appearance in your local newsagent from the 26th of September, and what a doozy it's going to be. There'll be playable previews of Mindscape's long awaited *Captain Planet* and Vivid Image's *First Samurai* on our cover-disk, an in-depth view of the goings on at prestigious publisher Psygnosis, and a controversial look at software 'style'. And! Tons of features, reviews, tips and ... oh dear, we're running out of spa...